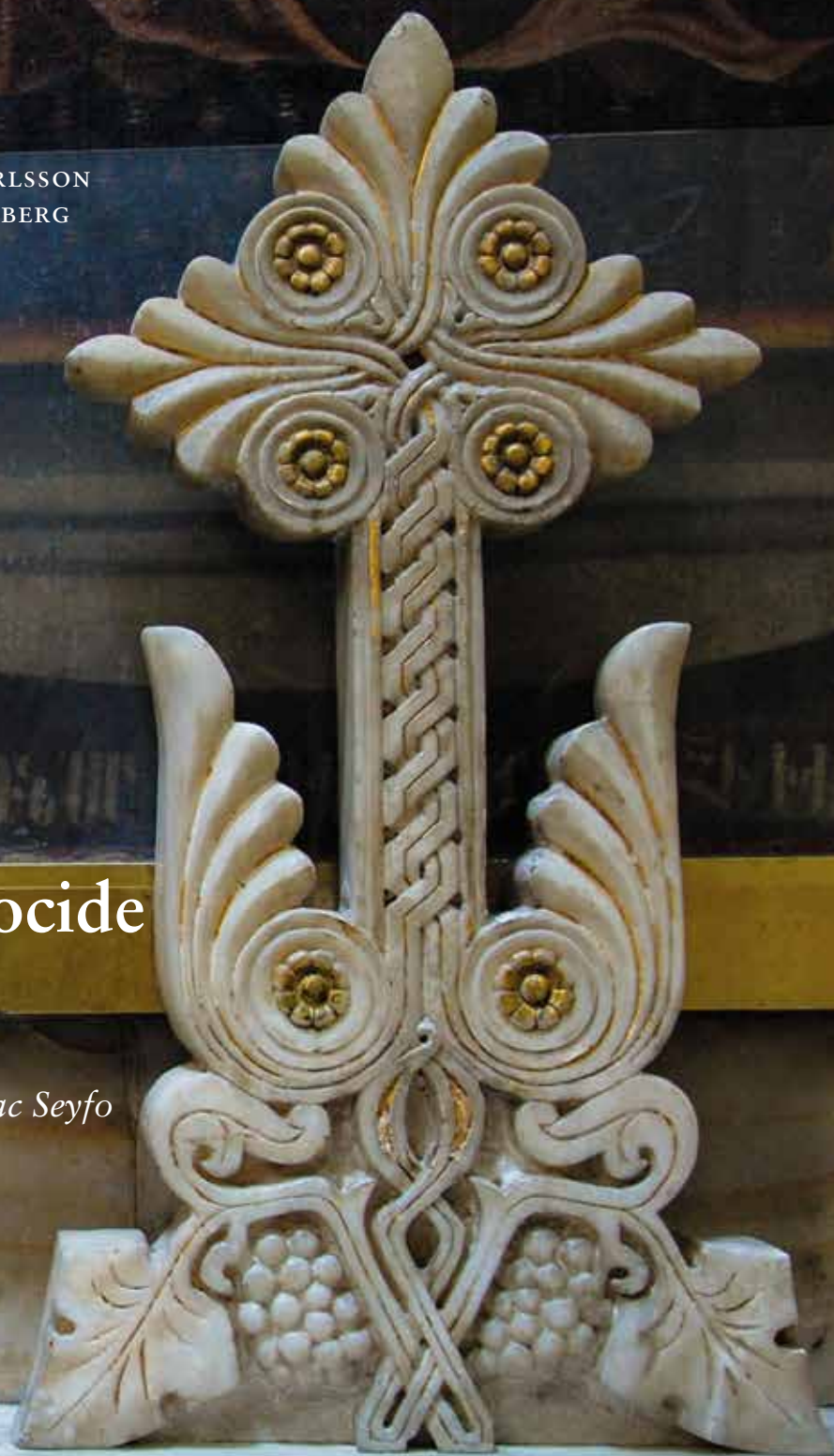


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In Times of Genocide 1915–2015

*Report from a conference on
the Armenian Genocide and Syriac Seyfo*



IN TIMES OF GENOCIDE
1915-2015



COVER PHOTO

This cross is to be found inside the Church of Resurrection, or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in Jerusalem. It stands next to the Tomb of Christ at an altar dedicated to “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary”, whom were the first to be told that Christ had conquered death (Matthew 28:1). These Armenian khatchkars, Cross-stones, combine the Cross of Christ with the Tree of Life – a reminder of the resilience of the Armenian and Syriac minorities in Asia Minor, still today.

Photo: Lars Hillås Lingius

Lars Hillås Lingius (ed.)

In Times of Genocide

1915–2015

Report from a conference on
the Armenian Genocide and Syriac Seyfo



2015



OVERLOOKING THE MESOPOTAMIAN PLAIN, the inhabitants of the Mar Augin Syriac monastery became eyewitnesses to the ransacking of villages below, and to the forced death marches into the desert, passing by. The monastery itself suffered from the Seyfo, but though partly in ruins, it is to this day an active monastery.

Photo: Mikael Aho Damar

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Greeting from His Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan Manougian

During its brief period of existence, the Swedish Christian Study Centre has become a dynamic centre of intellectual endeavour. Its academic activities have made an important contribution towards our knowledge of Jerusalem and its different communities, and thus it is rightfully considered part of the local cultural landscape.

In this year of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the present volume with its professional team of academics will make a significant input towards our understanding of the horrible phenomenon of genocide perpetrated on Armenian, Syrian and Greek people. We send our blessings, and wish you all the success in the fulfilment of your mission of goodwill in the Holy Land.

✝ Archbishop Nourhan Manougian
Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

Greeting from His Grace Archbishop Severios Malki Murad

What the Ottomans, together with those helping them, did 1915 to our Christian people – Syrian Orthodox, Armenian, Greek, and others – is considered a Crime against humanity. We ask all the countries in the world to recognize this genocide, so these indigenous Christian people can have their rights and properties restored.

It is our hope, that no other genocide will take place, and that the United Nations will put an end to all kinds of violence and war against innocent people, especially against Christians.

✝ Mar Severios Malki Murad
Syrian-Orthodox Archbishop, Jerusalem

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Preface

■ ■ ■ With this book, Studieförbundet Bilda is happy to present to a broader audience the lectures given at our conference *In Times of Genocide*, at the Swedish Christian Study Centre in Jerusalem January 14–15, 2015. We are grateful to the Swedish scholars who accepted the invitation to give a lecture, and contribute in writing to this report.

Professor *Klas-Göran Karlsson* gives an introduction to the academic field of genocide research, with special reference to the Armenian Genocide. Then comes some texts conveying testimonies from eye-witnesses to the genocide, starting with *Kevork Hintlian* who presents some twenty of the 800 witness reports he has gathered from survivors during the last fifty years, followed by professor *David Gaunts* research on Seyfo with certain focus of some priests who were there when it happened.

Maria Småberg and *Göran Gunner* write in their articles about some of the most important witnesses to the genocide when it comes to informing the Western powers of what was going on while it was going on: Scandinavian missionaries and organizations affiliated with them. In his article, *Vahagn Avedian* gives an account of the official re-

ports dispatched by the Swedish envoys to the Swedish Foreign Office.

While also giving some eye-witness reports, *Suzanne Khardalian* discusses in her article the phenomenon of memory and amnesia, partial and to some extent deliberate, among the survivors and their children in her introduction to her movie *Grandma's Tattoos*, which was screened at the conference. And in the closing article, *Maria Karlsson* presents her research about how the final stage of genocides tends to be not recognition, but denial using some well-established patterns.

It has been my privilege to work with these highly charged and challenging articles, dealing with the unspeakable horrors of the Armenian Genocide and Syriac Seyfo in the Ottoman Empire, with its focal point in 1915 – one hundred years ago. And it has been my privilege to – before, during and after the conference – stay in regular contact with these exquisite scholars. Thank you!

Lars Hillås Lingius

Director, Swedish Christian Study Centre,
Jerusalem.

The authors

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Kevork Hintlian is an Armenian historian and a Jerusalemite, affiliated with the Swedish Christian Study Centre.

Klas-Göran Karlsson is a professor of history at Lund University.

Maria Karlsson is a Ph.D. of Lund University. At the end of March, 2015, she successfully presented her doctoral thesis *Cultures of Denial: Comparing Holocaust and Armenian Genocide Denial*.

Suzanne Khardalian is a renowned, prize winning Swedish-Armenian journalist and film maker with a dozen films.

Maria Småberg is a Ph.D. and research fellow at the History Department, Lund University.

Opening

Samuel Gustafsson

Your Grace. Brothers and sisters, Ladies and Gentlemen. In short: Dear friends!

We at Bilda are happy to welcome you to this conference, commemorating 100 years since the Armenian Genocide and Syriac Seyfo in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

My name is Samuel Gustafsson. I am the Deputy Secretary-General for Bilda, and since Secretary-General Kerstin Enlund will not arrive until this evening, it is my privilege to open this conference: *In Times of Genocides*.

Not without some modest pride, we find among the lecturers some of the real experts on this terrible topic: genocide, specifically the one in focus during our conference.

Professor David Gaunt, professor Klas-Göran Karlsson, Ph.D. and research fellow Maria Småberg, journalist and film maker Suzanne Khardalian Holmquist, Ph.D. candidates Vahagn Avedian and Maria Karlsson. And of course Kevork Hintlian, an Armenian historian and a Jerusalemite, and a long-standing friend and associate of this study centre.

Among absent friends, one in particular shall be mentioned. Associate professor Göran Gunner proposed this conference and has been most helpful in preparing it. He should have been one of the speakers, but had an accident a few months ago and broke his leg. Göran is better now but the doctors gave him a no-go concerning flying here.

Bilda, which is the organization behind this study centre, is a liberal adult education

body, comprised of 48 member organizations, primarily churches and organizations connected to them. Our task is to work on a grass-root level, organizing local study groups on whatever topic a group wants to study. From time to time, however, we cooperate with academic scholars, of which this conference is an example.

Founded in 1947 by the independent churches such as the Baptists, Methodists and reformed churches, Bilda has had the privilege to welcome several new churches during the last decades. New in Bilda, that is, but otherwise much older than the original founding churches of Bilda, for example the Catholic church and almost all the Orthodox Churches established in Sweden due the ongoing globalization and movement of persons.

These movements have to some extent been the result of free choices, but to a rather high degree it has been forced on people, fleeing from war, persecution and terror.

So inside Bilda we find, among other Churches, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church. They experienced the Armenian Genocide and Syriac Seyfo in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, and they are today, together with people of all faiths, facing political violence in parts of the breaking Syria and Iraq. This is one of the reasons why we wanted to organize this conference.

During the genocide of 1915, some of the most accurate eye-witness reports of what

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was going on came from Scandinavian missionaries, reporting not only to their own organizations and through them to the Swedish government, but also to the American ambassador Morgenthau in Constantinople. And in 1920, Sweden was asked by the League of Nations to be the mandate power for the emerging Armenian state, but declined the offer. So this Swedish presence in the midst of things, is another reason for us as a Swedish study organization to invite to this conference.

Since 1991, we are the tenants of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Jerusalem, in this beautiful study Centre, the Swedish Christian Study Centre – SCSC. This, also,

contributes to our wish for doing this conference.

Through SCSC, Bilda organizes and facilitates some thirty study trips to the Holy Land every year, for groups coming from Sweden. Since its foundation, SCSC has received more than 10,000 Swedish visitors, and has made a substantial contribution to the interest in and knowledge about the Holy Land in Sweden.

And we are very glad at this moment to welcome you all.

With this, I open this conference.

Samuel Gustafsson

Deputy Secretary General of Bilda

The Armenian Genocide – the Archetype of Modern Atrocities

Klas-Göran Karlsson

The Task

The main purpose of this article is to suggest a complex understanding of the Young Turks' genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, by situating the atrocity in a systemic framework of a "genocidal" society and ideology. A structural and functional analytical framework will be established by joining with a scholarly approach that is more common in the social sciences than among historians. The basic idea is to identify general factors, variables or cases that are considered of crucial importance for explaining and understanding modern genocide. These factors are supposed to transcend chronological and national boundaries that traditionally set historiographical bounds. It goes without saying that this synchronic perspective must be supplemented with a diachronic one, but focus is nevertheless on genocidal structures more than on historical processes of genocide.

Here, the most general structure involved is modernity itself, which is a particularly interesting phenomenon in a late Ottoman context in which modernity is not an obvious and unquestionable concept. However, in genocide studies, the modern condition more often than not also includes the twisted road towards the modern condition, often called modernization. No doubt, Ottoman society had been subjected to modernization since the last decades of the 19th

century, not least due to external influences, and the Young Turks' assumption of imperial power in 1908 strongly accelerated this process.

The difference between a historical and a structural approach should not be exaggerated; historians often find fault with the static, synchronic character of a structural analytical operation, but surely the latter can also cast new light on dynamic, diachronic problems of continuities and influences involved in genocide processes. The present preoccupation within history scholarship on comparative, entangled, transnational, trans-cultural, global and other orientations often presupposes that historical and structural perspectives are applied together. Within genocide studies, there are also useful conceptual instruments to bridge over the different perspectives, such as "cumulative radicalization", adding a historical touch to a structural state.¹

I will start my essay by narrating the Armenian Genocide as we know it in the present scholarly discourse. Even when I continue by inserting the Young Turks' genocide of the Ottoman Armenians into the bigger structural and functional picture of modern atrocities, the starting and ending points of my analysis will be the Armenian Genocide, while other modern killings of categories of people will be referred to in order to better explain and understand the atrocities that fell upon the Ottoman Armenians. First, I

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will briefly discuss the archetypal character of the Armenian Genocide. Subsequently, I will carry out a structural analysis of the genocidal society, focusing particularly on the ideological factor.

The Armenian Genocide as We Know It

The Ottoman Empire was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state. Although Muslim Turks was the dominant group, the Empire was also home to Arabs, Kurds, Jews and Christians. In the late Ottoman state, the Greeks and the Armenians were superior in numbers among the Christian groups. Though segregated from Muslims, these communities were tolerated and guaranteed certain privileges and immunities on religious grounds, provided they did not demand equal rights. The Greek and Armenian communities in the capital, Constantinople, had managed to secure positions of power and influence in the government administration and economy, thanks to their knowledge of languages and Western culture. In the 1870s, just over 2 million of the Ottoman Empire's 40 million inhabitants were Armenians.

The influx of European ideas and industrial goods in the late 19th century served to intensify existing antagonisms between the traditional Muslim-Turkish ruling elite and a crisis-hit artisan class on the one hand and the Armenians, who were influential in the foreign trade and banking sectors, on the other. Tensions between these groups were exacerbated by demands from the increasingly prosperous Armenian middle class for the same civil rights equal to those enjoyed by Muslims. In order to achieve a stronger impact, the Armenians organized themselves into political parties, all of which, despite different ideological leanings, issued nationalist demands for greater autonomy for their own community. The new

ideas coming into the Empire from the West prompted considerable misgivings among many Turkish intellectuals. Their suspicions, which were directed at all Ottoman Armenians – the merchant class and political players as well as the vast majority of impoverished peasants loyal to the regime – gave way to physical persecution. Between 1894 and 1896, thousands of Armenians were massacred. Most of the violence took place in East Anatolia, near the border with the Ottomans' arch-enemy Russia, where the majority of Armenians lived. Fearful of Armenian political and social mobilization and alarmed by their supposed lack of loyalty to the state, the Ottoman Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, allowed the massacres to continue. Protests from Europe's major powers and their Ambassadors in Constantinople went unheard. However, these horrible events should probably not be characterized as genocide because it is not apparent that the Sultan intended to exterminate the entire Armenian community. Rather the aim was to eliminate those groups of Armenians who, in the Sultan's view, posed the greatest internal threat to the existing order and to the supremacy of Islam in the Empire.

In 1908, the conservative Sultan was dethroned in a bloodless *coup d'état* by a group of reform-minded young officers belonging to the Committee for Unity and Progress – CUP. This event marked the beginning of what became known as the Young Turk revolution. The Young Turks were animated by one of two political and ideological tendencies. One was liberal and constitutional, dedicated to the decentralization of the Ottoman Empire and greater autonomy for its religious and national minorities. The other was nationalist, aimed at preserving centralized Ottoman power and strengthening Turkish domination of its people. As the Empire's economic plight wor-

ened, the internal opposition gathered momentum and the external defeats in the first Balkan war 1912–1913 placed increasing pressure on the Young Turks. Words like freedom and equality gradually disappeared from their vocabulary. Opposition to their rule was met with violence and terror. Ottoman society was militarized. Although the Young Turks were originally in favour of Western-style modernisation, Turkish nationalist and Islamic tendencies were now reinforced. As a result, the Armenian problem had once again become a pressing concern for the Ottoman leadership in a number of ways. Pan-Turkish aspirations of uniting all Turks in the Ottoman Empire, the Caucasus and Central Asia became popular. The Armenian heartland was looked upon as a galling wedge into the territory of an envisioned Greater Turkey. Thus the Ottoman Armenians were, in the eyes of the Young Turks, the ethnic group most responsible for splitting the country. They were disloyal to their Ottoman rulers and fraternized with their Christian European brothers, the rulers' main enemy in the Caucasus and the Balkans. With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and ensuing Ottoman reverses, the Armenians were seen as a concrete threat to the Empire's continued existence.

The genocide of the Ottoman Armenians began in the spring of 1915. Although the largest number of victims lost their lives during the first two years, the killing continued until the end of the war in 1918 and even longer. On April 24, 1915, hundreds of leading Armenian intellectuals were rounded up in the Armenian *millet*² in Constantinople, deported and murdered. This was the starting signal for the mass murder of approximately one million Armenians. It was not confined to areas where the army was engaged in military action but

took place in many parts of the empire. In the capital and large cities, where the presence of foreign missions was probably a restraining factor, the violence was on a smaller scale. Genocidal acts included arrests, executions, massacres, coordinated forced deportations and engineered famine. While able-bodied men often were arrested in groups to be shot outside towns, women, children and elderly persons were deported in accordance with a temporary deportation law that was introduced in May 1915, but with no indication that it was targeting any specific ethnic group. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians succumbed during the “death marches” to the Mesopotamian and Syrian deserts and other remote parts of the Ottoman domains. Children were taken from their parents and brought up as Turks. Armenian assets were expropriated and confiscated. Many Armenian churches, monuments and memorials were destroyed. The Young Turk officers and Ottoman gendarmes were not the only perpetrators. Criminal elements and nomadic groups also took part, with the government's blessing. A secret “special organisation”, founded by the Young Turk leaders and given official responsibility for intelligence services and counter-sabotage operations, was particularly active in mounting attacks on convoys of deported Armenians.

There is no doubt that the instigators, led by the interior minister Talaat Pasha, and the minister of war, Enver Pasha, intended to solve the problem of the disloyal, double-dealing Armenian minority once and for all by using the First World War to cloak their operations. A decision to commit genocide was taken and an overall plan of operation was jointly implemented by the military authorities, the ministry of the interior and the central committee of the ruling CUP. The US ambassador, Henry Morgenthau, was one

of many eyewitnesses. In his book “Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story”, published in 1918, his assessment of the mass killing is clear and unequivocal:

The real purpose of the deportation was robbery and destruction; it really represented a new method of massacre. When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact.³

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The well-informed US ambassador was ideally placed to converse with the Young Turk leaders and to influence them. It is worth quoting one such conversation with Enver Pasha as it illustrates the Young Turk mentality well and leaves little doubt about the intention to commit genocide:

‘Of course, I know that the Cabinet would never order such terrible things as have taken place’, I said. ‘You and Talaat and the rest of the Committee can hardly be held responsible. Undoubtedly your subordinates have gone much further than you have ever intended. I realize that it is not always easy to control your underlings.’

Enver straightened up at once. I saw that my remarks, far from smoothing the way to a quiet and friendly discussion, had greatly offended him. I had intimated that things could happen in Turkey for which he and his associates were not responsible.

‘You are greatly mistaken’, he said, ‘We have this country absolutely under our control. I have no desire to shift the blame on to our underlings and I am entirely willing to accept the responsibility myself for everything that has taken place. The Cabinet itself has ordered the

deportations. I am convinced that we are completely justified in doing this owing to the hostile attitude of the Armenians toward the Ottoman Government, but we are the real rulers of Turkey, and no underling would dare proceed in a matter of this kind without our orders.’⁴

On May 24, 1915, just a month after the genocide had begun, the Entente Powers warned the Ottoman government not to commit crimes against “humanity and civilization”, stressing that if such crimes were committed, the government members would be held personally responsible. Looking back, it is clear that they were not. When the war ended, just over a hundred Committee party leaders were tried in Ottoman courts. However, the international trials promised by the allies in 1915 never materialized. Both Talaat and Enver Pasha fled to Berlin. Talaat was assassinated by an Armenian avenger in 1921. He was described by the German Foreign Ministry as a “great statesman and loyal friend”. When Enver died in 1936, he was honoured by Hitler with a state funeral.

The Archetype, the Paradigm and “the Other”

In our analysis of modern genocide, professor Kristian Gerner and I have identified the Armenian Genocide as the archetypal genocide of modern history.⁵ The idea of this concept is not so much that it should refer to the first modern genocide in a chronological sense, since it can be argued that the colonial atrocities in late 19th and early 20th century – the Belgian King Leopold II’s brutal exploitation of the Congo Free State and its indigenous population in the 1880s, and the Germans’ genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples in German South-West Africa in the years 1904–1907 – preceded the Young Turks’ massacres of Armenians as the first modern genocides. Nor does

it primarily reflect the fact that it was the first genocide perpetrated by means of modern technical and communicative devices. Rather, the idea of the archetype relates to the fact that the analytical framework of the Armenian Genocide in important aspects is the world in which we live today, characterized by the nation-state, a nationalist ideology, national majorities aiming for ethno-nationally clean and pure states, and exposed and vulnerable ethnic minorities who do not fit into the structure of the modern state. The Young Turks' killings were not directed against the population of a foreign or a newly conquered state or other territory, but against their own Armenian and other Christian subjects. Ethnic cleansing, forced deportation and mass murder on a genocidal scale were the tools employed in an attempt to realize the nationalist Turks' vision of an ethnically homogeneous state, either a preserved empire with a strong Turkish core, or a Turkish nation-state. In both cases, of empire-saving or nation-building, removal of the Armenians was regarded as imperative. Never before had an entire people been targeted for murder on ethnic or religious grounds. The destruction of the Armenians implied a qualitative change in the history of political violence.

In George Mosse's euphemistic characterization, the First World War marked a certain brutalization of European consciousness.⁶ The rise of a brutalized Europe was not only connected to the acts of war themselves, but also to changes in the international order brought about by the war. In fact, even one of the ostensibly more beneficial effects of the war – the notion that peoples or nations had a right to independent statehood, a concept fundamental to US president Woodrow Wilson's peace proposal and to the deliberations of the parties at the Paris Peace Conference – was to have calami-

tous consequences for groups regarded as a threat to a desired ethnic homogeneity. While arranging Europe in accordance with the formula "one people—one nation—one state" was the greatest wish for many European collectives, it proved to be an extremely painful process for others. Although somewhat idealistically divorced from political reality, Wilson should not be made the main scapegoat. His main key to avoid the unintended consequences of his peace solution was the simultaneous creation of a League of Nations, an intergovernmental organization with a principal mission to maintain peace by settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration, and by securing the protection of minorities in Europe. Unfortunately, for different reasons, the League of Nations never lived up to its noble objectives.

In the eastern part of Europe, to which the Ottoman Empire clearly belonged, the First World War radically changed the map by laying the foundations of the nation-state. Siding with Germany and the Central powers, the Ottoman Empire was defeated in the war and finally disappeared from the map in 1923. However, from the viewpoint of the Young Turk nationalists, the population and resettlement policies triggered and legitimized by the Great War and its immediate aftermath were opportune. The Armenian Genocide was a successful political-demographic project which actively prepared the Turks for a homogeneous and uniform Turkish nation-state, rid of Armenians and other Christian minorities. The genocide, part of a larger plan for the homogenization of Anatolia, was conducive to transforming the Ottoman Empire into a Turkish state.⁷

In the same vein, we have considered the Holocaust to be the genocide paradigm, in the sense that the Nazi murder of European Jewry is the ideal type of genocide, the atro-

city most consistent with most definitions of genocide. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1948 and came into effect on 12 January 1951. Its provisions strongly reflected the impact of the Holocaust and the trials of leading Nazis at Nuremberg immediately after the war. Indirectly, it could be argued that also the Armenian Genocide constituted a point of reference, since Raphael Lemkin, the lawyer who more than anyone else struggled to legally establish the genocide concept, was acquainted with it during his studies in Berlin in the early 1920s when he attended the trial of Talaat Pasha's Armenian murder. Nevertheless, the Holocaust, more thoroughly scholarly explored than other modern atrocities, often serves as an analytical pattern for all other genocides, performing a natural point of reference and providing concepts and interpretations that are – often uncritically – applied on other genocide histories. While interested parties of other genocides often claim similarities between the Holocaust and “their” genocide, hoping to gain a more unconditional recognition of their cause, most activists, politicians and scholars connected to the Holocaust history dismiss these similarities, arguing that the Holocaust constitutes a unique or unprecedented genocide.

In this perspective, the Soviet Communist terror is probably best analysed as the “significant other” modern atrocity. It is more often than not connected to the Nazi genocide, in an ambition to either demonstrate the similarities or interrelations between the totalitarian Communist and Nazi regimes, or to refute any of these proximities. However, even in the latter case, there is often an implicit or “tacit” comparative element involved. While those who dissociate them-

selves from any similarities often base their opinion on the merciless war fought between Nazi Germany and Communist Soviet Union in the years 1941–1945, their opponents usually refer to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939 to demonstrate the proximity between these regimes.

Five Genocidal Periods

When writing general genocide studies, historians, sociologists and others have ventured to classify genocides into different categories or types, based on historical developments, roles, accusations, functions and results or societies and states involved.⁸ Other scholars are more hesitant of such an analysis, with reference to variations in sequences of actions, scales, technologies, degree of organization and other historical particularities.⁹ Nevertheless, my starting point is that five genocidal periods can be identified in modern history.

The first is the late imperialist era during which colonial exploitation intensified and conflicts between colonial powers and native populations increased, as well as conflicts between the colonial powers themselves. The second period, to which the Armenian Genocide chronologically belongs, is the time before, during and after the First World War. It was a period characterized not only by military violence but also by the break-up of societies, by revolution and by the fall of the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern and Ottoman Empires. A third period is the age of totalitarian regimes, 1930–1953, with Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin as main actors in Nazi and Soviet Communist atrocities, a fourth the decolonization era in the decades following the Second World War, and a fifth the 1990s, informed by the numerous ethno-nationalist and other conflicts that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and East European communism.

An immediate analytical objection is that in this periodization, the Armenian Genocide belongs to another historical period than the Holocaust and the Soviet terror history. The periodization is not without interest, and other scholars, such as William Rubenstein, have chosen to include the Armenian Genocide into the totalitarian period.¹⁰ If we choose the First World War context, we tend to interpret this genocide as a defence against the disintegration or decomposition of the Ottoman state, i.e. as a basically conservative, empire-saving process. But, if we follow Rubenstein and denote the Armenian Genocide as an expression of a totalitarian context, we rather emphasize its radical and progressive character, oriented towards total war and total revolutionary change, or, with Helen Fein's expression, "fulfilment of the state's design for a new order".¹¹ No doubt, there are several indications that the second and the third periods have much in common and should merge into one, characterized by a continuous thirty-years' war of the 20th century. Furthermore, the Soviet terror period stretches over both eras, with a "red" terror as part of an extremely brutal civil war that belongs to the First World War era, and a Stalinist "great" terror that clearly is part of the Second World War context.

The Structural Approach

The chronological dimension is not necessarily the most fruitful for a genocide scholar. Alternatively, as mentioned in the introduction, we could choose to focus on recurrent processes and factors during these modern periods, factors that represent a continuum or have a certain general applicability that goes beyond the unique historical context of each particular genocide or period. Through this approach, genocides from different historical contexts can be interconnected in a systemic way.

Among these genocidal factors is obviously war. The First World War was the first modern war, a radicalized, industrial war that included biological warfare, ethnic cleansing and racial killing. Some even say that this war was the foundation of modern society, with its strong state apparatus, mass character, democratic or totalitarian leanings and nation-state or nationalist ideals. First of all, the First World War was a total war, in which killings were indiscriminate, with no distinction between militaries and civilians. War and genocide became hard to differentiate between when total warfare engaged all aspects of society and aimed at destroying the entire hostile state, society and culture. On the one hand, this merging of war and genocide has correctly been called a degeneration of modern war.¹² On the other hand, it has been pointed out that war and genocide analytically can and should be kept apart and that total war did not produce genocide. Rather, it has been argued, the modern war "created the military, political, and cultural space in which it could occur, and occur again".¹³

To understand the Armenian Genocide, the presence of war in general, and unsuccessful wars in particular, is of crucial importance. No doubt, the continuing late Ottoman wars, defeats and territorial losses culminating in the catastrophic First World War scared severely the Young Turks' decade in power. The territory they ruled over became smaller and smaller. The wars meant that normal political activity and long-range social and economic reconstruction work had to be pushed into the background by more urgent tasks to handle, such as the war crisis and to hold together the disintegrating Empire. Open constitutional processes had to give way to closed sessions within a Young Turk military oligarchy, and, from 1913, to a military dictatorship who centra-

lized political decisions. Liberal, constitutional ideas are obviously much easier to transform into political practice in peace than in war, and the rise of an aggressive Turkish nationalism can be regarded as a more or less natural corollary of the strained war situation and tendencies of disintegration. Demographic pressure added bitterness and helped radicalize political attitudes. This pressure was due to the military reverses that the country suffered in the Balkan Wars and in the subsequent World War, and the arrival of many displaced Turks into Anatolia. Christians had driven the Turks out of the Balkan area, and if no adequate steps were taken, the same could happen in the Anatolian area, was the Turkish fear.

Consequently, in a wider perspective, war or the threat of war strengthens the collective tendency to look for conspiracies and scapegoats, especially among those who have or are thought to have ties with the enemy camp. No doubt, such connections were facilitated by the fact that many Armenians since early 19th century lived on the other side of the border, in the Transcaucasian region of Russia. War can also foster genocide by hampering efforts to find alternative solutions to perceived problems. In addition, the mobilization of the Ottoman army and various irregular groups provided the crew for deportation and extermination. External opposition was weak, because war makes it harder for other states or the international community to intervene against regimes committing genocide. The Armenian Genocide certainly took place with the curtain up, but priorities of the ongoing World War were others than rescuing Ottoman Armenians. To sum up, war tends to sanction and approve genocide.

History also demonstrates that revolution is a kindred dimension to genocide. Modern revolutions can be perceived in two

completely different ways: as a bright, almost romantic process, expressed in terms of the brave struggle of unselfish intellectual elites against an oppressive old regime, or as a dark, despotic or totalitarian process, expressed in terms of the ruthless struggle of power-hungry intellectual elites to seize power at any cost. The “benign” revolution fosters progress and democracy as implied in the motto of the French Revolution – freedom, equality and fraternity – while the “malign” revolution leads to loss of liberty, lack of equality, dictatorship, oppression and genocide. It goes without saying that none of these two revolutionary stereotypes have ever existed in the real world. More interesting is the fact that all revolutions have two sides, albeit of unequal weight. At the same time as “evil” revolutions may result in oppression, terror and genocide, they are often concerned with social policy and public welfare, which attracts large strata of a population. Remember that it was the “Welfare Committee” of the French revolution that started the great terror and decapitated aristocratic and other members of *l’ancien régime*. The beneficial effects of “good” revolutions sometimes disguise the atrocities they cause, not least among those intent on defending the revolutions ideologically by calling them “progressive”.

Revolutions create insecurity by cutting people off from the past. Old, deep-seated values and standards suddenly become obsolete. The new post-revolutionary regime urgently needs to restore security, stability and legitimacy, justifying the revolution by describing it as a battle between good and evil, with the revolutionaries unequivocally cast in the role of the good. Those groups with links to the old order, to external powers and to the evil past are stigmatized and demonized. The next stage, which often coincides with a *de facto* power struggle

either to consolidate or to bring down the revolution, is terror and genocide.

Communists in power murdered real or imagined opponents of the revolution on a mass scale on a number of occasions during the 20th century. While ruling communist parties seldom, if ever, succeeded in combining their rule with respect for democracy and human rights, their policies have often been identified with crimes against humanity. The link between revolution and genocide is often less apparent in countries where non-communist revolutions have taken place. However, Ottoman history provides another distinct example. After the Young Turk Committee for Unity and Progress overthrew the autocratic Sultan in 1908, a brief period of reform rule and liberalization ensued. Armenian radicals supported the revolutionary Young Turks and generally welcomed the departure from the Sultan's repressive, increasingly Islamic policies. However, hopes for reforms, minority rights and autonomy soon evaporated. The reformist regime rapidly gave way to increasingly aggressive nationalist policies and the persecution of political opponents. It was during this phase the Armenian Genocide was launched, closely related to both a derailed revolution and military defeats that threatened the continued existence of the Empire.

Moreover, empire, related to both imperial governance and imperial disintegration, can be chiselled out as another genocidal factor. An empire is a multi-ethnic state based on hierarchical power relations between on the one hand a governing nation with a dominant interest in the rule, economy and defence of the empire, and on the other subordinate ethnic groups or nations. Imperial states are not ruled democratically, nor do their populations enjoy the status of citizens. Rather, the survival and expansion of an empire depend on a combination of

physical coercion and passive submission, with a constant interplay of opposing elements – domination and subordination – which often leads to tensions between ethnic and national groups, in particular in periods in which nationalist ideas are advanced. Throughout imperial history, the dominant group has tended to use violent force to maintain subordination and discrimination. When empires and colonial systems are dissolved, violent conflicts with genocidal features are often triggered off. The Armenian Genocide is far from the only example from modern history: post-colonial genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, and post-Communist conflicts in the Balkan and Caucasia serve to strengthen the idea that imperial strain, disintegration and heritage involve structures that can turn into genocides.

Ideology as a Genocidal Factor

Ideologies never kill, only human beings do. But ideology provides the inspiration, intention, authorization and legitimation for perpetrators of genocide. A set of ideas can make genocide appear necessary and justifiable, even meaningful, if it can be demonstrated that a progressive end justifies even the most brutal means. It is difficult to imagine a genocide taking place at all in the absence of an ideology that appeals to broad or at least powerful segments of the population. Since genocide implies that normal human conduct is violated in the most extreme way, the ideology involved has to carry a strong power of conviction and persuasion. This applies to variations of the modern mass ideologies that celebrated triumphs in the 19th and 20th centuries: nationalism and communism. When discussing genocide typologies, Kurt Jonassohn and Frank Chalk point out that 20th century genocides belong to a type associated with the implementation of a belief, a theory, or an ideology.¹⁴

The ideological conviction is often related to a dramatic and critical historical situation, involving war and revolution, but it is not generated only by the ease of the reception but also by the efficiency of the ideological message. In a genocidal ideology, society moves from a dark history via a present struggle to a bright future painted in utopian, visionary colours. To this is often added a strongly activist component when selected individuals and groups consciously and resolutely intervene in the “natural” course of history, defeat the enemies of progress and pave the way for Utopia: the classless, ideal society of communism, the racially pure, thousand-year Reich of National socialism, or, in the case of aggressive nationalists, an ethnically cleansed and homogeneous nation-state.

If there was a genocidal ideology active in the Ottoman Empire of the Young Turks, it obviously belongs to the last case.¹⁵ However, the rise of a Turkish nationalism was not unequivocal. Few historical periods have been depicted in a more multifaceted, polarized and contradictory way in scholarly discourse than the Young Turk era of the Ottoman history. In the years 1908–1918, traditionalism met with modernity, decentralization with centralization, imperial Ottomanism and Islamism with Turkism and other nationalisms, secularism with a religious revival, liberal reformism with conservative autocratic or revolutionary totalitarian rule, and attempts at socio-political integration with the most horrendous massacres of ethnic minorities. Many have argued that the idea of being a Turk was alien to many Ottomans, which has explained the “delay” of Turkish nationalism. In many scholarly works, the Tripolitanian War against Italy 1911–1912, the Balkan wars 1912–1913 and the First World War 1914–1918, or rather the continuing military disasters of

the Ottoman forces in these wars, changed the historical scene, providing a framework for the rapid and aggressive rise of Turkish nationalist ideas. Political life was militarized and brutalized. Young Turk rule turned repressive and centralist.

The more the Ottoman Empire dwindled, the more aggressive was the nationalist rhetoric. Turkish nationalist ideas became a political weapon used more frequently in an official endeavour to assimilate some and dissimilate others. “Turkishness” seems to have gained ground among the Young Turks and their supporters as a primary ideological instrument for unity and stability. Intellectual ideologists such as the historian Yusuf Akcura and the sociologist Ziya Gökalp, the latter a leading member of the Committee of Unity and Progress from 1911, provided the backbone of the nationalist ideology. Leading Committee politicians such as the doctors Bahaeddin Sakir and Mehmet Nazim together with Talaat and Enver Pasha were conducive to transferring them into a political discourse.

The development of these ideas followed a well-known pattern: from a few intellectuals’ cultural and populist work with linguistic and historical dimensions, glorifying an eternal Anatolian peasant living in the real Turkish homeland, to the introduction of Turkism as a secular and political programme, although sometimes hidden behind or blurred with a traditional Ottomanism. In the new Young Turk system of active government intervention, a politics of Turkification meant that the Turkish language and history was actively promoted in schools and in society. Journals and associations with a specific “Turkish” character appeared *en masse*.

The situation surely became even more serious, and the ethnic “core” of the nationalist ideas more pronounced, when the

Young Turks' Ottoman state stumbled into unwelcome wars in which the numerically inferior minorities, in particular the non-Muslim communities, were drawn in by means of their preconceived antagonism to the Turkish rulers of the Empire. "Unreliable" non-Turks were expelled, deported and in other ways separated from the Empire as the war-driven process of disintegration went on, while the Young Turk ideologues identified the Turks as a reliable Anatolian "core" of the Empire. Even worse, non-Turks were perceived as impossible to live side-by-side with, and, through their ties to Europe, Greece and Russia, as a threat to the very survival of the Empire. No doubt, the situation was one of "cumulative radicalization" of Turkism.

From 1913, the Young Turk nationalists, of whom many were not ethnic Turks, started to promote political, economic and cultural Turkism. The nationalist constructs were to a great extent drawn in black and white. They embodied clear-cut racial distinctions between "we" and "the others", "superior" and "inferior", "friend" and "foe", "reliable" and "unreliable", "pure" and "tainted", thereby effectively positioning Turks against Armenians. The latter were stigmatized as Christians or as a category protected by the European great powers, in particular the Russian arch enemy. History provided a rich empirical fundament for the distinctions, but ideas for a better future were also in circulation. A great concern for the Young Turks was what they perceived as a lack of Turkishness in the eastern provinces. With no Armenians left in eastern Anatolia, opportunities would be created for a new Turkish homeland, "Turan", gathering all Turks of Western and Central Asia into a cultural community, and rejecting all non-Turks. Possibly, this Pan-Turkish expansionism aimed at making up for lost Ottoman territories elsewhere. These ideological constructs obviously ser-

ved the purposes of fostering a strong internal sense of community, to legitimize actions against marginalized victim categories regarded as being foreign and hostile, and, afterwards, to rationalize the brutal repression directed against these categories. The line between ideology and conspiracy theory is indistinct. Sometimes, too, it is difficult to distinguish between ideology and deep-seated cultural patterns, partly because the kind of ideological constructs described here both draw on and politicize old, established perceptions, and partly because they often are so effective in transmuting from conscious ideology into a more or less unconscious culture.

However, to make historical justice to the ideological dimension of the Young Turks' genocide in a brief comparative note, it must be established that Turkish nationalism did not have the same strong and widespread support in Ottoman society as Nazism had in Germany and Communism had in the Soviet Union. The Young Turk ideology did not penetrate Ottoman society as Nazism did in Germany. One reason is that the Nazi party and state were more organizationally coherent and functionally efficient structures than the equivalent Ottoman ones. In administrative, communicative and technical respects, the Young Turks' repressive apparatus obviously could not match Nazi or Soviet Communist effectiveness in murdering large populations. In Ottoman society, violence was much more multipolar. Besides, the general level of modernity was generally lower in Ottoman Empire, including the spread of education and literacy.

When I argue that the Young Turks' massacres of Ottoman Armenians constituted the archetype of modern genocide, I focus on their modern political and ideological inducements of the genocide. But the identification with "Turkishness" in Ottoman so-

ciety was certainly not as clear-cut and uniform as the corresponding racial and class distinctions in Nazi Germany and Communist Soviet Union, respectively. The Young Turks' Committee for Union and Progress was a political party with not only the building of a Turkified nation as their basic political programme, but also the creation of a modern state. However, these aims were not necessarily divergent; the Young Turks' policies of social and demographic engineering can certainly reflect both processes.

22

Genocide and Modernity

Modernity is a multifaceted concept which obviously cannot be made justice here. In the Sultan's Ottoman Empire, due to their international contacts and skills, Armenians, together with Greeks, were considered valuable agents of social and economic modernity. At the same time, they were depicted as politically dangerous, since their internationalism and industriousness could upset traditional power relations and destabilize the imperial society and state. It was obviously the latter suspicion that triggered off the massacres of Armenians in the years 1894–1896.

In fact, during the entire 19th-century reform period in Ottoman Empire, called *tanzimat*, reformist representatives of the rulers were confronted with a dilemma of modernization. In this dilemma, the situation of what scholars often have denoted as “middleman minorities” or “mobilized diaspora” is decisive for the results of the reform process.¹⁶ In the modernization process, these Christian minority categories, better educated than the Muslims, had both the requirements and the ambition to serve as important agents of economic and social change in a society in urgent need of reforms and change. Otherwise, as the “sick man of Europe”, the Empire would run the

risk of perishing in the European struggle between the great powers. Simultaneously, there was another risk involved: such a progressive societal development could undermine traditional political power structures.

Together with the Greeks, the Armenians were the most successful bankers and businessmen in the Ottoman Empire. Also in state bureaucracy such as the Foreign Ministry, Armenians had a proportionately very strong position. Quite the reverse, Turks were weakly represented in commerce, trade and industry. The entrepreneurial Christian minorities' upward mobility, based on an ability of reaping the fruits of initial modernization, raised the discontent and envy of the Muslim, Turkish majority. Fear was imminent that the Armenians, with their extended international contacts, their connections to Armenians in the neighbouring Russian Empire, and their nationalist ambitions to re-establish an Armenian state of their own, should sell out their Ottoman homeland. The fact that only a tiny minority of Ottoman Armenians belonged to this industrious middle-class made no difference; ethno-national imagination became more important than reality. In the fateful year 1915, a Turkish nationalist expressed these attitudes when he noted that

[t]he Christian population of Turkey has been consistently progressing, partly by means of privileges too easily granted, and partly by their own initiative, and they are ousting the real owner of the country more and more from their heritage.¹⁷

Needless to say, the “real owners” and heirs of the Ottoman state were the Turks.

Initially, the Young Turk power assumption promised that progress should outdo unity. However, during the first years of the First World War, unity had certainly become

more important than progress among the leading Young Turks. Economic and military rationality, closely connected to the non-Muslim communities with their command over important parts of the agricultural, industrial and commercial infrastructure, had to give way to nationalism and large-scale violence against these communities.¹⁸ At the time of the outbreak of war, the modernist dilemma was gone. When characterizing the ideology-driven genocide of modern history, Chalk and Jonassohn argue that this is the only type of genocide that was carried out in spite of enormous economic, political and developmental costs for the perpetrator state.¹⁹

The Body Politic and Modern Genocide

The idea that genocide is linked to modernity is to a great extent based on the works of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, especially his masterpiece *Modernity and the Holocaust* from 1989. He often starts from the drastic idea that the modern era “has been founded on genocide, and has proceeded through more genocide”.²⁰ Such a provocative statement obviously opens for discussion, but only one aspect of Bauman’s astute argumentation of the destructive elements of the Enlightenment heritage and the growth of a modern bureaucratic culture of social engineering will be emphasized here. Hopefully, this aspect can help us to enter deeper into the genocidal ideological construct of the Young Turks. It concerns the perpetrators’ “modern” intolerance towards what in bureaucratic culture is classified as different or deviant. Individuality, diversity and variation have no place in the modern project, whereas standardization and uniformity have. Rational representatives of what Bauman calls the “gardener state” adopt a special terminology, talking about “weeding out” undesirable elements, i.e. extermina-

ting threats to the perfectly run modern state or to development and progress. Bauman cites the language used by Hitler and other Nazis to marginalize and stigmatize Jews – Aryan purity is contrasted to Jewish impurity, the healthy Aryan to the diseased Jew. In Nazi discourse, denying the victims their humanity, Jews were called by non-human names, as lice, bugs and vermin, which obviously refer to things people want to annihilate. Reading Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*, it becomes apparent that the same stigmatization and demonization discourse, pointing out enemies of Communist modernity as harmful elements such as cancerous tumours, vermin, germs and microbes, was frequent in Soviet Communist terror. The principal function of the modern gardener state, according to Bauman, is to detach and isolate “useful elements that are to survive and flourish” from “harmful and unhealthy elements that must be exterminated”.²¹

Metaphoric, pseudo-scientific terminology frequently crops up in genocidal contexts. In one of his most celebrated poems, “Red Apple” from 1915, idealizing a clean and pure Turkish nation-state “that nobody plots against”, Ziya Gökalp maintains that “the people are a garden and we are the gardeners”. “We”, of course, referred to the Young Turks and their ruling Committee of Unity and Progress. To all probability, Armenians are the imagined plotters. In the next lines of the poem, the work of the gardener is described in wordings that immediately suggest themselves from Bauman’s analysis: “trees are not rejuvenated by grafting only; first it is necessary to trim the tree.”²²

The Committee of Unity and Progress was founded in 1889 in a military medical school in Constantinople. Since several leading Young Turks were trained doctors,

they often tended to articulate their ethno-nationalist ideas through a medical and biological discourse: Armenians became “an inner disease to be diagnosed”, “an incurable ill to be annihilated”, “a mental illness to be treated and cured”, “a deadly worry to be handled”, or “a tumour to be operated”. The suggested connection between medicine and genocide may seem dubious, since a doctor’s primary duty is to save lives, not to kill. However, as Hans-Lukas Kieser has demonstrated in his analysis of the Young Turk doctor Mehmed Reshid, the Young Turks saw their rescuing mission in a larger, ethno-national scale:

Faced with the necessity of having to choose, I did not hesitate for long. My Turkishness triumphed over my identity as a doctor. Before they do away with us, we will get rid of them, I said to myself. /.../ The Armenian bandits were a load of harmful microbes that had affected the body of the fatherland. Was it not the duty of the doctor to kill the microbes?²³

The body politic which the Armenians were thought to infect, degenerate or in other ways hurt was the Turkish Fatherland that needed to be “liberated from its pains”, become one and indivisible through cleansing and purification. Underlying the entire discourse is an organic view of state and society, with the political party as the brain, the executive branches of the genocidal state as the heart, and society as the body. The body, both the human individual and society itself, must be kept clean and healthy. The

main responsibility for this cleansing, and for the ideal in which the leaders and the people joined forces, lies with the brain and the heart.

Paradoxically, Bauman attaches very little importance to ideological blueprints of genocide, and to their origins and developments. For him, modern atrocities and their cultural representations originate from modernity itself and its bureaucratic machine, without any triggering devices such as gradually more sharp-edged and aggressive ideologies. He has been criticized for taking up such an extreme structural and functional position, which historians have described as both intellectually unsatisfying and immoral. To a certain extent, I can share this critical standpoint, and it has certainly not been the purpose of this article to draw a straight horizontal line between modernity, modern ideology and genocide. Rather, it has been maintained that cases of modern mass ideologies in specific historical situations have served as necessary prerequisites for the perpetration of genocide. Still, what makes Bauman’s interpretation worthwhile is that he demonstrates the fundamentally contradictory character of modern genocide; being the ultimate crime against a category of people as well as humanity, it also stands out as an expedient, appropriate and therefore objective instrument of progress for the perpetrators and their supporters and defenders, in contemporary life and sometimes even in posterity. In my opinion, this is the most offensive and the most delicate historical lesson of modern genocide.

Endnotes

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- 2 Millet was the Ottoman system for non-territorial autonomy, leaving ethno-religious minorities with a limited self-government in cultural, economic, legal and religious matters.
- 3 Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, New York: Doubleday 1918, p. 212–213.
- 4 Ibid, p. 240–241.
- 5 Kristian Gerner & Klas-Göran Karlsson, *Folkmordens historia. Perspektiv på det moderna samhällets skuggsida*, Stockholm: Atlantis 2005, pp. 35–47.
- 6 George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991, pp. 159–181. See also Klas-Göran Karlsson, *Urkatastrofen. Första världskrigets plats i den moderna historien*, Stockholm: Atlantis 2014, passim.
- 7 Taner Akcam, *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press 2012, pp. 29–62.
- 8 Cf. the first chapters of two well-known collective works: Isidor Wallimann & Michael Dobkowski (eds.), *Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2000, and Robert Gellately & Ben Kiernan (eds.), *The Spectre of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003.
- 9 Cf. Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1981, pp. 101–105.
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- 16 For the middleman minorities and mobilized diasporas concepts, see Edna Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities”, *American Sociological Review* 1973:5, pp. 583–594, and John Armstrong, “Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas”, *American Political Science Review* 1976:2, pp. 393–408, respectively. See also Klas-Göran Karlsson, “De som är oskyldiga idag kan bli skyldiga i morgon.” *Det armeniska folkmordet och dess efterbörd*, Stockholm: Atlantis 2012, pp. 67–76.
- 17 Quoted from Ugur Ümit Üngör & Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property*, London, New Delhi, New York & Sydney: Bloomsbury 2011, p. 34.

- 18 See Eric J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation-Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey*, London & New York: I.B. Taurus 2010, pp. 70–71.
- 19 Chalk & Jonassohn 1990, p. 37.
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- 21 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity 1989, p. 70–71. For intellectual historical analyses of Bauman's ideas of the instrumental bureaucratic rationality, see Marie Fleming, "Genocide and the Body Politic in the Time of Modernity", in Gellately & Kiernan (eds.) 2003, pp. 97–113, and Klas-Göran Karlsson, *Europeiska möten med historien. Historiekulturella perspektiv på andra världskriget, förintelsen och den kommunistiska terrorn*, Stockholm: Atlantis 2010, pp. 193–208.
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From my Courtyard Survivors of the Armenian Genocide

Kevork Hintlian

Hearing Small Talk on Hideous Matters

Instead of presenting a dry paper riddled with politically correct language, I decided to talk about my voyage which started half a century ago.

My earliest childhood memory is my grandmother, a widow having lost her husband in 1915, who, like many others, never remarried and wore all her life a single colour, black. As I grew up, I noticed dozens in our courtyard, widows always silent, associating only with their peers and whispering to each other. I never grasped the symbolism and thought that older women prefer to dress in dark colours.

I had never heard of an alarm clock. The church bell very much filled the same function. At five, when the church bell rang, my grandmother and all these widows would go to church, each had her corner. They knew the hymns and the liturgy by heart. During the rest of the day, the only book she would read was the Bible and would murmur hymns from the hymnbook. Besides, she would teach my mother the cuisine of the old country, basically *mante* and *sou-boe-reck*. She was treated as the matriarch and nobody would challenge her expertise as a master cook. Punctually, she would get me toys for Christmas and St George's day.

Every Sunday, my uncle would drop in and a lively but nostalgic conversation would develop between my father, uncle and grandmother. The topic was recollections,

about dispossession from the land, the severe winters, the accumulation of snow, pilgrimages, and how pilgrims from the South of the country came on their horses to spend a week at the monastery of Sourp Karapet (John the Baptist) in Kayseri (Cappadocia). My uncle and father were choir boys and they would remember every detail of the liturgy in different feasts. They would break into hymns with the intonation of hundred years ago. The choir sang from their lodge in the gallery which was situated in the dome, they mentioned this with particular pride. Then they would enumerate the tombstones of the notables who were buried in the courtyard of the church. Of course, all of them donors, church builders, and they would engage in discussions charting where each one lay. This way I learnt about the prominent families, Gulbenkians, Khoubesserians, Baleozians. But the most they enjoyed was to talk about how the family gathered around the hearth. All in a circle under a woollen blanket and engaged in storytelling.

One of the major events in town was the reception reserved for people returning from pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the title *mah-desi* which they carried to the grave. And they talked often about the American missionaries and their schools and hospitals and about Christmas day when the missionaries distributed gifts to the children from America. The lost paradise was the odyssey

of every family. Those who came from villages would talk about harvest and the excellence and uniqueness of the fruits. I remember everybody from Diyarbakir would talk about the huge size of the watermelon and the people of Van about the friendly bear who would pay a courtesy visit every day and pick up his pear. The famous cat of Van, with each eye of a different colour.

My family came from Talas, the birth place of Mar Sabas, in Cappadocia, but I had never seen any picture of Talas, nor was there any picture of my grandfather and the family. I have never seen a picture of my uncle who died on the death march at the age of four, nor of the house which they left behind. What hovered in my mind was only graphic and vivid descriptions.

In 1964, I was at the American University of Beirut to continue my studies. In 1965, it occurred to the Armenians that fifty years had elapsed. So they marked it worldwide. And in Beirut, 100,000 Armenians assembled in the sports stadium to remember it. I was there, orators spoke one after the other, but nobody noticed the rally outside the stadium. All these commemorations never hit the headlines except locally. But memorial books flooded the market. My first encounter with the genocide was in Beirut dropping by Armenian bookshops.

Encountering the big “Why?”

During my summer break in Jerusalem, Professor Vahakn Dadrian came for research to Jerusalem. He had just come back from Germany going through the consular archives of the war years, he was to return there 28 times.

It was the first time that somebody was looking at the deportations as a systematic discipline. He gave two lectures to packed audiences and called on the youth to explore their recent history. These lectures were

the catalyst for me and I set on for my voyage. For the study of the archives, he stayed six weeks. Every day he would engage in long discussions with my father about topics relating to day-to-day life in genocide years. I discovered for the first time that my father was an officer in the British army during the allied occupation of Constantinople and was employed as interpreter in the trials of the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide.

These discussions fascinated me and this was my first encounter with the essence of the topic. The more I knew about it, the more it grew mysterious. Professor Dadrian was to return to Jerusalem in 1971 for an extended stay. In the preceding five years, he had been to almost every important archive and disappointed with some, as he did not find them thorough, or they did not fulfil his expectations, as in such subjects crucial information is not readily available. It is a matter of decades of tireless work, requiring skilful patchwork techniques. Like Dadrian, other scholars had come to the conclusion that, to build up a scientific narrative besides archives and consular reports, you need to document the survivors. Myself, I chose as my priority to interview the survivors.

The last three nights, I had troubled sleep, as I felt that I had to formulate and convey the feelings and the experiences of hundreds of survivors I had interviewed for at least 40 years. In my mind, I made a quick survey and, above all, it was a painful parade. One other reason for my interviews was to know about the old land, most of all about their life in the human hell. These stories are not to be found in the official archives. Like other researchers, if I did not have the chance to meet them, they would have been lost for good.

Hearing all these stories I often wondered what motivated these individual torturers who subjected people to so much suf-

fering, people they had never met. To that big “why?”, I’ve never been able to answer till now.

Thinking back on the 800 survivors whom I’ve interviewed, other survivors I have lived with, receptacles of bitter memories, sometimes waiting for months and years to capture their moods, relive with them the vividness of their traumas, sinking with them into the abyss of perdition, I was a companion of their loneliness, of their misery. Each time, I had to revisit mentally their chamber of detention. Each time you talk to a survivor, the story has a different pulse, a different respirational rhythm.

How different the history of the genocide would have been without their torment stories, it would have been impossible to meet the tormentor without them. Through them, we know the killing fields, the land soaked with blood, the rivers with the floating corpses, the canyons, the cemetery of thousands, the mountain passes, which served as traps or ambush sites. All this landscape becomes alive.

Through them, we know the mass graves, the ditches, the resting places of their restless souls. Their stories of life and death defeat the Turkish military logic, these simple folk with their memories dripping with blood defy the evil and through their survival and their graphic stories undermine the plans of their executioners whose only wish was to annihilate them.

There is a brotherhood of destiny, and even in torment there is creativity. The tormentors have their hierarchy, their heroes, their exploits, their legends, their endless stories and their sagas of heroic exploits on defenceless victims. The survivors are the only humans in this dehumanised world. The tormentors are proud of their inhumanity, as if killing more grants them more energy and eternity.

Giving History Names and Faces

I return again to the courtyard of my childhood. Stories about the old country were told with deep gratification and pride. Talking about their birthplace everybody claimed to be rich and that they owned many orchards. It was not accepted to ask about what happened during the death marches. Everything was said in whispers as it was unspeakable. So you would overhear about what happened to a family from a third person. That domain was discrete, taboo, sacred and nobody dared to violate that unwritten rule. There were two stories which everybody knew and treated with veneration.

One was a bent short woman of 80 who went to church twice a day with her inseparable cane. Even her cane could not slow her trembling constitution. They called her *meshetsi Mayrig*, Mayrig from Mush. Her five children were slaughtered on her lap. Once I asked her about her husband and if ever she had children. She said all happened on this lap and broke out into endless sob. Her room was full of incense and with holy objects hanging from the ceiling, like a chapel. She was like a woman hermit and was treated like a walking saint on earth, murmuring prayers as she walked. She and the other widows never travelled in their life, did not need passports and some never left the Armenian quarter. They lived a virtual life and were almost part of the building of St James. They had reinvented their cosmos.

The other story everybody knew was that of police *Vartouk* (Rose). She was a customs officer, a short woman, never smiled and never associated with neighbours. Her story was as it was in the case in many couples. In her orphanage, matchmakers arranged her to marry with another orphan. On the night of her honeymoon, she noticed a brown patch on the hip of her husband. Then she

said, my brother had the same spot. As they discussed further, it became clear that her partner was actually her brother. She never married again and looked traumatized. The dazed look never left her.

With time, with the growing number of interviews, I acquired a vast knowledge of geographical spots, place names, towns, villages, names of notorious canyons. All these place names became a necessary tool for an effective communication with the interviewed person. Though there was an overall plan of destruction, each individual was a story of its own and a category of its own. Besides Jerusalem, I included interviews in my travels wherever such a possibility presented itself. I travelled 4 hours beyond Richmond to meet a person above 100 who knew two words in Armenian. He told me how the relatives of those left behind in diaspora gathered every Sunday in church hoping to hear if their relatives were alive and that they raised money for the orphans.

Each story sheds new light on one aspect of human suffering and each story could not have been more graphic.

Once I met a short lady of 80 called *Margot from Marseille*. She was from a village of Sebastia (Sivas). I asked her: "Do you remember the day you left your village?" In a very innocent way, she said: "I was pained at a sight of our small dog who was crying after us from our roof." Then she talked about the pregnant women in the convoy. As a new bride, she was one of them. When they delivered, they wrapped the new-borns and placed them on the roadside and she did the same and put her baby under a tree. Then, after a few days they arrived to a village and were lodged in a khan:

Out of the blue, several Turks came in with tied sacks, we thought they were watermelons. They gathered all the women, untied the sacks

and spread the contents on the floor. They were new-born babies clinging to each other. They said, come here and identify your babies. The women rushed and screamed, this looks like mine. /.../ Then they added 'now you have seen them', collected them, tied the sacks and took them away.

Zarouhy Odabashian was a neighbour, the mother of Mardick minimarket. She was a silent, polite and laconic lady. I didn't have much dealings with her but we greeted each other warmly. One day, as she visited my father in his office, I made her talk. She was from a village Shoushankan from Van. As a group of 30 women were escaping, they were surrounded by Turks. They were all sexually assaulted and left naked. Then they decided to finish them off and took them to a dilapidated building and attacked them with knives and axes. Then they had the roof collapse on them. Zarouhy, who was a girl of nine was wounded and fainted. When she woke after several days, in total darkness, she found herself under her mother who was agonizing. With a faint voice, her mother asked for water. There was no water. Zarouhy said that until today her voice begging for water still rings in her ears. She crept out of the ruined building and she walked a few metres. Two Turks saw her and knew immediately that she was Armenian as she was totally naked. They whipped her until every part of her was blue. Then they discussed among themselves whether to kill her or not. One of them said leave her alone. As she told the story, Zarouhy was perspiring profusely and breathing heavily.

Serpouhy Hekimian, a resident of the Armenian quarter and grandmother of ceramic artist Garo Sandrouny, told me the following:

I am from Adiyaman. In 1915, I was a young girl. One night, they arrested all the men. It

was impossible to visit them in prison, then the authorities called us saying ‘come and see your husbands in front of the city hall’. We went and saw them, they looked exhausted and every five were tied by ropes. We greeted them from a distance and they were marched away by the gendarmes. This was the last time we saw them. We, the women, children and old people, were deported a week later and, one day, as we were sitting on the banks of the Euphrates, it was midday, we saw almost a hundred headless swollen bodies tied to each other flowing downstream. Women wondered if these were their husbands judging from the colour of their clothing. They were followed by more corpses. Women were screaming, pointing to one corpse and the other.

Now the fate of their husbands was certain.

To my question : “Was it true that the waters of river Euphrates became turbid or red with blood ? “ She said: “As we did not have fresh water, we dug canals and cesspools near the banks of the river. Always, at the bottom of the cesspool, there was heavy sediment of blood.”

I talked several times to *Sarkis Khatchikian* who worked for more than 50 years as typesetter at the printing press of the Patriarchate. He was from Ordu, on the Black Sea, his parents who were deported hid Sarkis and his brother Diran in a Greek family. When searches by Turkish police intensified, looking for Armenians in hiding, they were both placed in a Greek orphanage. When the Turks later were to learn that there were a few dozen of them in the Greek orphanage, they resorted to a new method. Every few nights, boatmen would come and propose to the boys a night sea ride. The boys were excited and competed with each other to get on this boat ride. Sarkis noticed that no one of these boys came back and, one day, he saw several corpses of his friends of

the orphanage washed ashore. Sarkis informed his brother and, with a rope made up of shreds of cloth, escaped from the orphanage into the woods. Then, he found a Greek family in a village, who were family friends. He went around dressed in Greek village costume till the end of the war.

We had a *kawas*, a gatekeeper, called *Haig Mekertchian*, but he was popularly known by his Turkish name, *Hassan Agha*. That was the name given to him when he was forcibly converted to Islam. With time, he had become a valuable apprentice to a Turkish baker. As he was preparing the dough, he would hear Turkish clients come and boast how many Armenians they managed to kill. Almost like a competition. According to *Hassan Agha*, there were several older Armenian converts to Islam and they were given special jobs like muezzin, calling Moslems to prayer, or assistant to the Imam. These appointments were made in order to accelerate their integration into Islam.

Today, the famous Kalbian family exists because of a hip fracture, according to *Dr. Vicken Kalbian*, a prominent doctor in Winchester. He told me the following about his father. “My father, Dr. Vahan Kalbian, graduated as a doctor from the American University of Beirut in 1915. He went back to his birthplace, Diyarbakir, to celebrate the occasion with his family. The celebration, like a wedding, lasted a week. The mother, while dancing, broke her hip. Dr. Vahan insisted that he would take her for surgery to Beirut. Along with her came five other relatives, including the grandfather of Dr. Harry Hagopian. Because of the hip incident, the five survived while the entire family perished in Diyarbakir.

Then there was *Housep Der Vartanian*, a teacher at the Araratian orphanage. He had witnessed the massacre of 10,000 Armenians from the labour battalion working on

the Bagdad line tunnels in the Taurus mountains. By order of Enver, the defense minister, they were massacred in a place called Baghtche. He authored a book called “The massacre of Intilly.” At a relatively young age, he had a stroke and walked with a cane as he was paralyzed on one side. I have never seen him talking to anybody.

Then there was *Mihran Krikorian*, a rug mender working at my uncle’s shop. He had a deep scar on his head after the Turks axed the family. He was extremely moody and had sudden bursts of anger. After the killing, the Turks had dumped everybody in a well including him. During the day, he would wonder to find food while at night he would hide in the well despite the decomposed bodies and the terrible stench.

Beatrice Kaplanian was a pious and quiet woman who lived till the age of 102. She was from Nevsehir in Cappadocia. Notices for deportation were served. According to her, the town-crier announced in the Armenian Quarter that they were to leave in two groups with a two-week interval. They took the family donkey and three or four of them took turns along the way. Their mother would beg them so that she could rest but the children rode most of the time. Beatrice remembers this with great pain. After walking a month, their feet were swollen. Then they reached Katma and Meskene (open air concentration camps), one of ten camps, where tens of thousands were gathered before being sent to new destinations.

These were tent-towns with no sanitary conditions, infested with epidemics. Hundreds died daily. In front of the tent, one would find corpses wrapped in shrouds. Special people came to dispose of the corpses. They would pick them up and throw them into a valley or a pit at the edge of the camp. Sometimes, the family or relatives were so exhausted and depressed that

they did not bother to attend the funeral of the loved ones. One night, her father passed away, they wrapped him and placed him in front of the tent and in the morning they carried him away and dropped him in the valley. None of the family attended the funeral. And, one day, when her mother was away, a Turkish couple entered the tent and convinced her to accompany them to their home. In this way, she was adopted. The mother of Beatrice had never to know where she disappeared. She stayed two years with the Turkish family, they treated her well. After the armistice, the Americans picked her up and put her in the Near East Relief orphanage, and there she was given the name Beatrice. She was an avid reader of the Bible and this was the only book at home. Despite the fact that she had lost all her family, her name and her identity, she would insist that she harbours no hostile feelings towards the Turks.

Once, I had a group of visitors from Canada. I learnt that one of the ladies was originally from Malatya where the massacres were one of the most horrible. I asked her about memories of her parents, she told me the following story. At the time, her father was 8 years old. The authorities conducted mass arrests. As a child, he was wandering about town. One afternoon, he overheard from a group of henchmen mentioning names of some Armenian notables whom they will drag to their death and the place of their execution. They happened to mention his father’s name. So, three in the morning, he was there. In moonlight he found two heaps. One of the naked headless bodies and the other severed heads piled on each other. He went through the heads one by one, hoping to find his father’s head. While doing it, he fainted and, later on, somebody adopted him. In real life, at home, every night he would scream and sob in his dream.

The scene would repeat itself and the whole family would wake up with him.

In 1980, I met in the Armenian Museum a survivor from Mush who told me his chimney story. He had witnessed how the Turks used a very effective method. In Mush, they went from village to village and herded the residents in barns and set them on fire. He was the only survivor from his village as he hid himself for hours in the chimney. He lost seven brothers, in compensation he had seven children.

Mrs. Bekian, a tiny woman living in a Greek Convent near Casa Nova, told me the story of her brother. When she felt that the Turks were taking away men to be butchered, she paid two golden coins to a Turk to use a bullet. After an hour, the Turk came back and handed over the blood-soaked clothing of the brother indicating that they had cut his throat. In my interviews, this recurred a lot of times. Upon asking somebody who knew about tribes, he indicated that this was a code of war, a concrete sign of victory on the enemy.

In my interviews I was often told how the husband, when he felt that he was to be taken away, would give to his wife the wedding ring and the family Bible to be kept for posterity. The family Bible had great significance among some families. In a camp fire, to which I was a witness in Beirut, when I and others rushed to help, I saw an old man running up the stairs of his burning wooden house. He emerged with a wrapped package. I said :”How do you feel ?”, he said “I am OK, as long as I managed to salvage the family Bible.”

My maternal uncle passed away in 1985, in our house, due to a massive heart attack. The night before, as if by some presentiment, graphically, he described how he and the parish priest had buried the church treasure in Talas in the church wall. After less than 24 hours, he passed away.

I wish to include briefly few more interviews which have provided me leads for deeper research or furnished new dimensions or simply contributed for a better grasp of the situation and its emotional repercussions on the survivor.

I have conducted research with orphans who have graphically described their daily routine. One such person was *Mary Kevorkian* who lived to be 100. A cheerful woman who until her last days used to do her daily shopping. She was full of energy and will to live. She told me, until her marriage she had no clue what it means to have relatives, she had never seen her parents, she had no idea if she had any brothers or sisters, as she was picked up from the street as an abandoned baby. Her icon was Maria Jacobson, her Director, the Danish missionary, who came all the way from Beirut to Jerusalem, to check if she had a happy marriage. Until today, she remembered her student number. Talking to orphans, one is struck by the number of institutions these people had to change, back and forth, sometimes moving from one country to another.

Another episode I followed and wished to hear first-hand was the fate of *the city of Izmir* – a city of a million – very cosmopolitan, with a lot of culture and refinement. Called the infidel city by the Turks, it was targeted and liquidated by Atatürk. The event happened September 12–15, 1922, Atatürk totally burnt the city. A fortnight before, a deal was reached between Western countries – England, France and Italy – that their ships would evacuate only their nationals and reject others (meaning Greeks and Armenians) and, to the disgrace of the West, the local nationals were rejected and not allowed to get on board Western ships through the use of boiling water or boiling oil. I managed to interview 15 survivors of Izmir. The last one was about 18 years ago,

spending a whole evening while in Chicago visiting my brother.

I wish to end with an incident during the deportation of our family. One of the maternal uncles of my father, *Seboub Hintlian*, worked in the Bagdad line. So they had the right to save one person. The choice fell on my *aunt Soultanik* who was 7 then. As the train reached Adana station, gendarmes came in the train and asked for the Hintlians. My grandmother produced the choice. My smaller uncle, Hagop, aged 4, ran after the sister. The gendarmes said only girls, not boys. Even an ordinary gendarme knew about the plan of extermination and the necessity of wiping out all males.

A Voyage Through Hell and a Glimpse of Humanism

My curiosity voyage about human nature at work during execution of a genocide took me half a century. I wanted to investigate layer by layer, sometimes I also drowned in the pool of blood, but that was a luxury. I had to transcend and could not indulge in sentimentality, nor could I console myself in the good progress I was making in my narrative. I strove always to float to be able to reflect about humanity and inhumanity.

I was in vain searching for a moment of humanity, for compassion. I constantly searched and wondered if humanity and inhumanity alternated in quick succession. After years of quest, I came across a gentleman called Jemal pasha, known in official history as a monster. I found humanity in him, cohabiting with the evil. Despite his notoriety, he saved tens of thousands of Armenians by virtue of his high post in Greater Syria. I discussed often the enigmatic personality of Jemal pasha with the late Archbishop Bogharian, an eminent scholar, whose clergy father buried 200–300 Armenians a day in Aleppo and Selimieh. He confirmed that he

saved thousands but most succumbed to epidemics.

I did not have the patience to read Dante but in the last half a century, I walked miles on stones paving my hell.

I found compassion among my survivors, some liked the Turks and continued to listen to Turkish music, my father included.

I realized that, at the height of inhumanity, one can still feel the warmth of humanity in human forgiveness. Many of these victims were ready to forgive the Turks. And even forgive God for his absence. And I, surrounded by these 800 faces who have vanished from this world, await this year after a century for a moment of humanity from the successors of the perpetrators – Modern Turkey. Despite a fact that a month ago an organization called Genç Atsızlar flooded Turkish cities with posters praising and thanking their ancestors for the ethnic cleansing. Still I believe it is not the end of times. And, at last, I thank my respondents who related to me about hell, and still went from this world with a smile and a hope of humanity to reign rather than the rule of the opposite.

Yes, I grew up in a village of survivors. They decided to keep their pain to themselves. They showered us with warmth, joy and humour. The courtyards we played in were joyful ones and they wanted us to be positive and self-giving. We are thankful to our parents for their generosity and, at this moment, I'm thinking of that agonizing persons in the valley while life is ebbing away and only vultures are swooping on the corpses with their gruesome noises. History and humanity is sending a message to you, repose in peace, your story is being told, and to our Turkish brothers we have a message, rest assured that the abused victim has enormous power given to him by God, the power to forgive. It is the mission of humanity to liberate the Turk from his misery, to edu-

cate him not to draw pride in murder and blood. Our Turkish brothers, we are grateful to you, through your inhumanity, you have humanized us.

Our ghosts are still hovering on our villages and valleys daily.

A German archeologist, Professor Hütte-

roth, working on a dig in Turkey, once told me a story. One evening, the land shook around the archaeological site. Hütteroth asked his Turkish assistant: “Was it an earthquake?” He responded : “No. It is probably the ghosts of the Armenians who have come back.”

The Year of the Sword in the Province of Diyarbakir

David Gaunt

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When I was a teenager my family lived in Hackensack, New Jersey. This is a place that New Yorkers make jokes about, but they don't know that it is a hub for the Syriac Orthodox Church in all of North America. If I went out the door of our apartment building and turned right and went two blocks to Fairmont and then went two blocks down to Grand Avenue, I would pass a church. This was a rather plain American church but with signs in an unusual alphabet and black clothed priests with unusual head-gear. I was usually in a hurry to get downtown to the library or bookstore. But if I had stopped and looked closer, I might have seen Mar Athanasius Yeshua Samuel, the archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church in USA and Canada. Even so, I would then not have any idea of his importance.

Before he migrated to Hackensack he had been the head of the Saint Mark's Convent in Jerusalem where he did the work that made him world famous. He was namely the foremost collector of the Dead Sea Scrolls of ancient biblical texts hidden in jars and placed centuries ago in caves in the wilderness. Also famously, he sold the scrolls through an advertisement in the Wall Street Journal, enabling the scrolls to stay in Israel.

However, I will take up a different aspect of Samuel's life, namely his tragic childhood in the Ottoman Empire during the time of

genocide. He has described his life in *The Treasure of Qumran: My Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (published 1968 but written in 1954). Very few people have read this book, and I have never seen it cited in works dealing with the Armenian Genocide. It is an example of a Syriac source that provides eyewitness testimony about the conditions of not just his own people but also of the Armenians.

The Events in Helwa Village

Yeshua Samuel was born on Christmas day in 1907 in a newly created village named Helwa that is now located inside Syria a bit south of the border-towns of Qamisli in Syria and Nusaybin in Turkey. This was a farm village in a well-watered region just south of the abrupt and hilly ending of the Anatolian plateau towards the nearby desert. His parents had moved to Helwa from Tur Abdin, an area of considerable Syriac presence that is now in Turkey. His father was from Midyat, the only large town with a Syriac majority, his mother was from the large village of Basibrin. The farmers of Helwa lived in a symbiosis with their Bedouin neighbours and were bilingual in modern Syriac and Arabic. The Bedouins took care of the farmers' sheep in the dry season and in return they got grain. On one occasion eight year-old Yeshua was talking with the son of his family's sheep-herder. The Arab said that during the whole winter

Turkey had been at war and the child panicked, he had not heard a word of this before and became very afraid. "Papa! There is a war now and the Turks are killing people." His father tried to calm him: "Yes the Turks have been at war all winter long, but not with poor farmers or little boys. There is nothing for you to worry about." By the time the war is over, Yeshua's father Soumay is dead in a disease spread from the deportation victims, his uncle Yusef has been shot and killed in a battle, he has been separated several years from his mother Khatoun, his baby brother Malky has been killed thrown by a soldier into a burning building, he has been left for dead along a road but miraculously found and nursed back to health and reunited with his mother after a year. Of his family of five only two survive the war.

Helwa was not close to the routes that Armenian deportation caravans normally took. But some caravans of Armenians from further north passed by on their way to the desert.

They were far off – a thin, dark graph inching across the shimmering white horizon. /.../ Who they were, where they were going, moving so slowly into the desert, we did not know, but often I and my playmates in the field surrounding Helwa would look up from our games and wonder. /.../ As the heat of the summer [of 1915] blistered such ground as was not watered and the sky turned copper around a bloody sun, these ominous processions appeared more frequently and we learned that they were Armenians.

On one occasion the deported were marched right by Yeshua's village in order for the Turkish guards to demand a "donation" of food for fellow Christians.

From the edge of the fields we watched them pass. They were perhaps a hundred people, old people mostly and only a few were men. They hardly looked at us. When they did, no sign of recognition lighted their dark, vacant eyes /.../ their faces were clouded in hopelessness. We had heard rumours, and more rumours, and much propaganda as counterbalance. But now we had seen.

The men who guarded the deportees said that they were "colonists" underway to prepare settlements south of Mosul. But in the night and close to the village, they were shot. Only one of them survived and crawled to Helwa. He told that the story of a colony was a lie and that the guards had been criminals released from prison to escort the Armenians to the desert.

Many testimonies of survivors speak of criminals assigned to kill Armenian deportees. I was at first sceptical, until I found in the Ottoman Archive in Istanbul a telegram sent by Minister of Interior Talaat Pasha ordering the release of prisoners from the Siwerek prison. Also the governor of Diyarbakir province, Reshid Bey, made an agreement with a group of outlaws belonging to the Kurdish Rama tribe, whose base was near Batman and the Tigris River. These bandits, who had been banished for persistent murder and robbery, were pardoned if they would participate in the killing of Christians. They could also keep half of the wealth – money, jewels, watches and so forth – the rest, according to the governor, would go to the Red Crescent organisation. The Rama tribe escorted Armenians on rafts from Diyarbakir down the Tigris River and slaughtered them on the way. Bodies and parts of bodies could be seen floating all the way to Mosul. The Rama also perpetrated attacks and massacres on places along or near the river. They were seen at the villa-

ges of Ayn-Wardo, Dufne, Habses, Ka'biye which were Syriac villages, the monastery of Dayro da Sliba and the town of Hasankeyf with a mixed Armenian and Syriac population.

Let us return to the boy Yeshua Samuel's experiences. The man who had survived the massacre told of what was happening to the Armenians far to the north. He told about the fighting in the city of Van, of the corpses of murdered Armenians floating in lakes and rivers, and of rape-killings of young women. These stories were a shock to the villagers. They were used to oppression in the past but "they were not quite prepared to believe that such things could occur in the presumably civilized world of 1915. But they did. The people listened and learned and wept." The Armenian man died a few days later of a cholera-like disease and he had infected many of the villagers and Yeshua's father died in the epidemic.

Conditions in Helwa do not improve and the farmers decide to vacate the village in 1916 and get to the more defensible places in the hills to the north. Yeshua leaves with his uncle Yusef and most of the farm men. His mother remains with a group of women to finish threshing the grain after which the women intend to get north – mother and son never see each other for over a year.

Yeshua follows the men with their flocks north to the hills, but that is also Kurdish territory. After they approach the first cliff they are shot at constantly until they arrived at the ancient and fortress-like monastery of Saint Malky. It was also under constant rifle-fire. Inside, many people had already sought protection.

We entered to find the great courtyard of the monastery a panorama of disorder: dirty-faced children ran unrestricted amid muddled flocks of sheep and goats; dour women cooked in

groups over small begrudging fires; men slept against the wall or stretched upon the ground, some still grasping rifles tightly in their muscled hands. Our leaders paused, stunned at the sight before them. /.../ The monks fulfilled their Christian duty by granting sanctuary, but their human natures could not entirely disregard the fact that our presence could only serve to increase the wrath of the enemy.

The situation was dire, except for the animals there was little to eat, the men went out in the day to raid other villages to plunder grain and fruit. They had some old rifles, but ammunition was made of melted spoons, they were seldom successful and fewer returned as went out. One day uncle Yusef did not return. He had been shot and killed. Yeshua was nine-years-old and remained behind.

During the days, the women and children huddled tensely inside the monastery itself, listening to the whining bullets that assailed the courtyard. At night, the monks led us in prayer while some slipped off to bury our dead covertly in the darkness. Malnutrition underwrote death's invitation while diarrhoea, pneumonia, and infections passed from sheep to men, and untreatable battle wounds supplied the final requirements.

The monastery proved a bad place to remain at, it gave little shelter and the large number of Christians attracted the enemy. In 1916 the Helwa villagers determined to trek further north to Basibrin. Yeshua was then very ill and unconscious, believed to be close to death. It was decided to leave him by the wayside to die. Luckily, he was found by a family and nursed back to health. To make a long story short he was reunited with his mother after a year's separation. She had been searching for him. She told

him what had happened to Helwa. Before the women had finished threshing, the village had been sacked and burned by Turkish soldiers and only a few were able to flee. Asked what happened to Yeshua's younger brother she said:

During the burning and the shooting, Malky was separated from me and ran off in terror. Somewhere, another woman trapped inside a building screamed for her own son. A Turkish soldier – so they told me, for I did not see it – picked him up by his tiny leg, shouted 'Here is your little Christian lion, woman,' and hurled the baby against the burning wall.

Thus of the household of five, one had died of epidemic disease connected with the deportations, one had been shot and killed by a Kurdish rifleman, one had been murdered by a Turkish soldier. The oral histories collected by Süleyman Hinno indicate that the soldiers who destroyed Helwa were part of Nusaybin's death squad commanded by a reserve officer identified as Kaddur Bey.

In the winter of 1917, his mother took him to the town of Nusaybin where she hoped to find work. The German Berlin-to-Baghdad railway was constructing a section there. The Syrians assured her that there was work to be had, but warned that she should prepare for hardship.

If you don't mind labouring from dawn to dusk for the price of a few olives and a piece of bread, if you're strong enough to cart heavy rails of iron and lengths of oaken log, if your soft hands are capable of digging ditches till the blisters break and bleed, and if your Christian eyes can bear watching the Armenian prisoners beaten to death by the Turks.

The Armenian workers were prisoners and quartered in a guarded area with tents.

Yeshua's mother worked side-by-side with them and just as hard, but she was spared the vicious whip-lashings and verbal abuse that afflicted the Armenians. Ten-year-old Yeshua made friends among the children of the workers who scavenged the rubbish outside the military bivouacs in search of cast away food. One scene particularly remained in his memory.

Skinny, grimy children were pawing through the garbage near a German mess tent. Their famished fingers scurried like bony moles among the slops, and shot to their whimpering, drawn mouths with any morsel that those fingers found. A few feet away, in crisp, resplendent glory a tall, burnished German officer watched their miserable hunt as he fed his sleek stallion succulent mouthfuls of sweet, juicy raisins.

Yeshua Samuel's narrative is one of the few written testimonies dealing with a single Syriac family's tragic fate during the entire war. It is also unique in dealing with farmers, not with urban notables. Although the village was located far distant from the region of Armenian settlement, Yeshua's family was caught up in the chaos around the deportations and eventually the entire village was destroyed by one of the death squads. Indeed all villages with a Syriac population were destroyed in the entire district south and east of Nusaybin.

When the war was over, the Syriac Orthodox Church enumerated its damage in a memorandum that was presented to the British and French governments in 1919. It listed the number of victims as 90,313 persons killed, 156 churches and monasteries that were in ruins, 154 priests and monks that had been murdered as well as seven bishops. In the region of Nusaybin, where Yeshua's family lived, an estimated 7,000 persons had been massacred along with 25

priests. The Syriac Orthodox Church was only one of several Oriental Christian churches caught up in the Armenian Genocide. The others were the Syriac Catholic Church, the Church of the East (often called Nestorian), the Chaldean Church, and then an uncertain number of Protestant and Catholic converts. These churches combined, calling themselves the Assyro-Chaldeans, sent delegations to the Paris Peace conference desiring support to get their own state. The maps they presented showed wide territorial claims from the city of Urfa in central Anatolia to the district of Urmia inside Iran. The Assyro-Chaldean delegation calculated that 250,000 of their group had been killed during the war, making up half of the original population. There is no way to check these numbers today.

Events in the City of Mardin

Helwa was an isolated ethnically and religiously relatively homogeneous village on the edge of the desert. The city of Mardin, by contrast, was an important multicultural multi-religious commercial centre situated on vital caravan routes. Mardin is an ancient and beautiful city, built by cramming together houses on the steep slope down from a fortress on the top. Houses are literally built on top of each other with one family's roof becoming another family's terrace. It is a very well ordered form of residential chaos that has evolved over the centuries and withstands modernization.

Because of this building pattern, Mardin functions as an open-air theatre providing the people with an outstanding view of major events that ripped through this small city in World War I. Although Mardin was far from the battle-front, large elements of its population were harassed, humiliated, deported, imprisoned, tortured, paraded through the streets, massacred. Resi-

dents could also see what was happening to the death-marches of deportees coming down from provinces further north that were marched past the city on their way to Der Zor. The horrors that took place were observed by many – some perhaps enjoyed them like the spectators of the Roman gladiator fights, others saw this as the wrath of God punishing his people for some collective sin, still others saw this as the murdering of innocent citizens falsely accused of plotting revolt. A great number of observers saw the terror as a historical moment shattering forever the traditional subtle balanced multi-religious, multi-ethnic pattern of life that had evolved in Mardin. Some called it *nakba*, the Arabic word for catastrophe, some called it *firman* after the Turkish name of a royal order believing it was decreed by the Sultan, some called it *qafle* the Syriac word for massacre, but generally it is now known as *seyfo*, (sword, an alternative spelling is *seyfo*), as in the phrase: “1915 the year of the sword”.

We know of the chronicles, diaries, and annotations of many different people who were residing in Mardin in 1914–1915 and who described the reign of terror that was instigated by the acting governor Bedri Bey, police chief Memduh and others starting in June 1915. Some of the writers are only known by their initials such as A.H.B., A.Y.B. and P.V.M., others published their books anonymously like the Syriac Catholic priest Ishaq Armale, who had fled to Lebanon after the war was over. In some cases the writings lay unpublished for decades after they were first written down – like those of the three French Dominican monks Jacques Rhétoré (whose manuscript was discovered in Mosul after the first Gulf War), Hyacinthe Simone and Marie-Dominique Berré. A few like that of the diary of the American Protestant missionary Alpheus

Andrus are still known only in manuscript. These writings are probably just the tip of an iceberg and many other chronicles were probably written, but have disappeared or lie undiscovered. One Mardin person that we know wrote a manuscript that is still undiscovered is the Chaldean Catholic priest Joseph Tfinkji. This manuscript should contain much information about the Armenians and Syriacs who were given asylum by the Yezidis in the Sinjar Mountains – because he served as the priest there. Thanks to the many written testimonies, Mardin is one of the rare places in the Ottoman Empire in which we have a relatively complete day by day description of the persecution of the resident Armenians, Chaldeans and both Orthodox and Catholic Syriacs.

I shall now take a few observations from these eyewitness accounts and analyse them. Most of this come from the very detailed descriptions of Armele and Rhétoré. Their usual point of observation was from the terrace of the large building that now houses the Mardin museum, but was then the Syriac Catholic patriarchy where Armele served as secretary to the archbishop. On July 4, 1915, Armele was outside the city walls taking a morning walk on the small hills just beyond the western gate. He is broken off from admiring the trees bearing wonderful fruit by a calamitous scene:

What is that I see over there at Ömer-Agha's water spring? A great caravan advances like a herd of sheep or cows. I must take up my telescope and look! An enormous army of close to ten thousand people! Most of them are women and children. There are some elderly too. I see soldiers who escort them but beat them and kick them. They try to flee. Above them rifle barrels appear. My ears hear shots. I see a group that is surrounded by some soldiers. I see them brutally drive them toward a fort. Oh God!

Where to? To the water well – just like during the latest weeks! They take off their clothes, pull out knives and attack them, stabbing them and throwing them down headfirst in the well. And so they go back (to the caravan). What an atrocity! /.../

They come nearer in groups like grasshoppers and they must be about eight thousand. How strange! A short while before they looked like ten thousand. Where are the others? Can these murderers have killed two thousand in three hours? How many were they when they left their homes? They must have been many more. I heard a few days ago that they amounted to 50,000. They come from Erzurum, Lice, Harput and other Armenian cities. /.../

The [Muslim] leaders of Mardin with their greying hair have arrived [to where I stand]. They sit on horseback and watch how women and children rush about in panic. Their faces show amusement. In their heads are greed and immoral thoughts. They spur on their horses and ride towards the water spring. Some get there first in order to steal and plunder. Watch out so they don't attack me. I better hide under a tree.

I see wealthy Muslims with their wives pushing their way through the weeping and sorrowful Christians. They are out to catch people. They chose and select among the women and children, especially among the girls. And they demand that they renounce their religion. /.../ The wealthy Mardin women manage to get hold of a large number of boys and girls, and the soldiers don't object: rather they invite it. I see some persons return with their haul. Some lead boys from their horses, others have caught girls whom they veil so that the kidnapper's friends cannot see them and begin to quarrel. One man has filled his pockets with gold and silver and returns laughing. /.../ Others con-

verse happily on their way back and cannot hide their joy over the goods they have gotten in such a short time. /.../ The soldiers have resumed their harassment of the Armenians and hit and kick them badly. They force their prisoners forward in the heat of the afternoon.

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What Armale witnesses is the end result of the total brutalization of the Muslim civilian population after weeks of exhausted human caravans trudging past the city. He sees how the local people are being invited by the escort to steal and kidnap children. He sees how many participate in the plunder, and enjoy the humiliation of the victims. By then the deportations and massacres had been going on for just over a month and had obviously made local people nearly immune to the fate of the Christians. This was a far cry from the good neighbourliness that was part of traditional Mardin life. Many of Mardin's Armenians and Syriacs could never imagine that their neighbours would ever turn on them. They expected instead to be protected – as had happened in 1895 when local urban Muslim clans beat off an external attack which aimed at a pogrom similar to that which took place in Diyarbakir.

Armale relates about the reactions to the first reliable information about plans to eliminate the Armenians:

Some leading Muslims employed Christian servants, who in hiding listened to what was said and told of the secrets. We did not believe them and said: Our friendship with the Muslims is purer than the eye of a rooster and stronger than iron. It would be impossible to turn such a friendship into hostility and mildness into harshness, because we have no conflicts with each other. We added that in our area, there were no hundred percent Armenians or opponents to the government. No we are, praise God, Catholics and loyal to the state and follow

its decisions to the letter of the law. Therefore, it has no reason to harass us and claim that we are hostile and plot treason. /.../ But we got disappointed. The truest friend and the dearest comrade has become the worst and most distrustful enemy. The sheep became wolves and the doves became snakes.

Here we can see a remarkable aspect of most genocide, namely that people who are normally peaceful and trustworthy can change into violent and brutal monsters if the situation is prepared by the authorities. They participate in actions they would before and even later consider immoral and impossible, and they might even deny ever having participated.

An absolutely essential step in creating a climate that permits immoral acts has to do with the activities of the leading personalities in the community. Some aspects have to do with hate-speech that dehumanizes the victims – describing them as dangerous creatures no longer human. The provincial governor of Diyarbakir, Reshid Bey, who had trained as a physician did this by portraying the Armenians as “bacteria” that needed to be eradicated. But other aspects have to do with bombarding the population through constant propaganda and disinformation. And for this the propaganda must come from the level of authority. In Mardin we can see a total shift among the political and administrative leadership because of initial bureaucratic opposition to the plans to eradicate the local Christians. Up until early June the office of district governor of Mardin was held by a humane official by the name of Hilmi Bey. Hilmi went out of his way to maintain balance among the Muslim and Christian communities. He showed great kindness towards the Armenian Catholic archbishop Ignace Maloyan and managed to persuade the Sultan to grant Maloyan a

gold medal in April 1915. Even Hilmi's predecessor Shefik Bey took an honour in treating the Christians as full and loyal Ottoman citizens. Hilmi refused to follow provincial governor Reshid Bey's secret orders to arrest the leading Christians. He is reported to have replied: "I see no reason nor need to arrest Mardin's Christians. So I cannot agree to your demand". He refused an order to arrest the Syriac Catholic archbishop Gabriel Tappuni and sent him a message:

I have some papers with an order to deport and kill you. But I know they are falsified and have no grounds. As proof of my friendship to you I have written to the governor and sworn my oath of your upright loyalty to the state.

Several other Ottoman officials also refused to arrest the Christians. For his dissent Hilmi was demoted and transferred to a post far away in Iraq. He was lucky, some of the lesser officials in Diyarbakir province, the sub-district governors of Lice and Beshire, were assassinated on the orders of the governor, and the district governor of Midyat, also outspoken pro-Christian, simply disappeared. Instead new persons from the outside replaced them and proceeded with the deportations and massacres. Foremost were the previously named Bedri Bey who was the vice governor of the province, Memduh the provincial police chief, Tevfik the provincial governor's adjutant, the commander of the provincial gendarmerie Harun. Many of these new people were neither Turkish nor Kurdish, but rather ethnic Chechens just like governor Reshid. They found a few Mardin residents who were willing to collaborate: foremost the criminal court judge Halil Adib. Together they collected a volunteer militia, a death squad armed with army rifles and commanded by reserve officers, that the locals called Al Khamsin (Arabic for the fifty-men).

There was one very big problem that the organizers of the genocide had to confront. Mardin's Muslim leaders had a long-standing tradition of protecting the Christians. During the Hamidiye massacres of 1895, the Mandalkiye and Mishkiye tribes had banded together to protect the city from the attack by a well-coordinated assembly of enemies who sought to massacre the Armenians. Also nearby, the Milli Kurdish confederation under Ibrahim Pasha was previously renowned for its protection of all Christians. Therefore the provincial government officials made great effort to convince the Milli, the Mandalkiye, the Mishkiye and other traditionally friendly tribes to break with their pro-Christian past and get involved in the government plans. This step was completed by May 1915 that is just prior to the major arrests by night time meetings with fanatic anti-Christian propagandist like Zeki Licevi and his brother Said. On the political level the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) national assembly member Feyzi arrived from Diyarbakir and according to Armale stated:

Let no Christian remain! He who does not do this duty is no longer a Muslim.

On May 15 a large meeting was held under the leadership of Feyzi with local members of the CUP party club, some of the leading bureaucrats, a doctor, a mufti, three sheiks, as well as chiefs from the Dashkiye, Mandalkiye, and Miskiye tribes. Feyzi according to Rhétoré agitated those who expressed a little interest in killing the Christians.

You surprise me. What is holding you back? Is it the fear of one day having to pay for this? But what happened to those who killed Armenians in Abdul-Hamid's time? Today Germany is with us and our enemies are its enemies. This

will surely give us victory in this war and we won't have to answer to anyone. Let us get rid of the Christians so we can be masters in our own house. This is what the government wants.

These men at the meeting were required to sign a document accusing the Christians of being traitors that had to be disposed of. Even those who were not enthusiastic signed in order not to stand out from the others. In this way this group became the core of the decision-making for the elimination of Mardin's Christian residents, meeting repeatedly to make plans. Through involvement in these meetings, participation by the Christians' traditional protectors was secured.

All of these preparations were necessary for the implementation of a swift elimination of the Armenians and Syriacs. According to Rhétoré, the city of Mardin had a Christian population of 6,500 Armenian Catholics, of Chaldeans 1,100, of Catholic Syriacs 1,750, 7,000 Syriac Orthodox and 125 Protestants. In the entire Mardin sub-province there were nearly 75,000 Christians of all denominations and during the massacres nearly 48,000 (64 percent) of them disappeared.

Perhaps the most terrifying scene that the Mardin residents could all witness was the sending away of the first transport of Christian prisoners on June 10, 1915. Hundreds of Mardin's leading Christian personalities had been imprisoned during the previous week – they amounted to more than four hundred adult men. They made up Mardin's Christian elite, most of them highly respected members of their community. They had been arrested on trumped up charges of plotting a revolt, hiding weapons and concealing bombs. Many had been tortured to give false confessions. But on the night of June 10 a ghastly spectacle was arranged intended to terrify the population

and break the possibility of any resistance. The French monk Rhétoré, an elderly scholar, made a count of men sent on a death-march. According to him they were 410 persons: 230 were Armenians and 180 were Syriacs or Chaldeans. Nearly all of them belonged to various branches of the Roman Catholic faith. Among them were ten prominent clergymen. Other observers supplied slightly different figures, for instance Armale says they were 417:

At the fall of darkness Mardin residents could see soldiers going up to the fort and then returning to the prison. They carried iron rings, chains and thick ropes. They called out the names of the prisoners one by one and they tied them with ropes so they could not flee. /.../ Then those who were thought to be Armenians were taken from the others. Rings were pressed around their necks and chains around their wrists. In this way they were bound, drawn and chained for several hours: /.../ After having arranged the men in rows they forced them out through the prison gates. Above them weapons and swords shined. The prisoners were kept totally silent. And a town crier cried out: 'The Christian residents who leave their houses will be amputated and put together with their co-religionists'. Then they trudged along the main street 417 priests and other men. Young and old, Armenians, [Catholic] Syriacs, Chaldeans and Protestants. When they passed the Muslim quarter the women came out and taunted. They insulted the prisoners. Children threw stones. When the prisoners came to the Christian quarter, the residents could not go out to talk or say farewell. Many stood by the railings on their roofs and wept, praying to God. /.../ The Christians shuffled in silence like pupils on the way to school. They made no sound. /.../ When they came to the western city gate, those monks that were still free and the American missionaries went out on the roofs to see their

friends for the last time and give them a farewell. They found them in a tragic state, so that blood could clot in their veins and terror hold them in its grip. There cannot have been anything more difficult for the eye to see or more painful for the heart than to stand there and look down on the many chained co-religionists. Every time anyone cast a glance at that street he would be reminded of the noble archbishop [Maloyan], the venerable priests and the march of the dear Christians.

At the front marched the provincial police chief Memduh. Many of the four hundred prisoners bore the signs of torture and were very weak. Some had bleeding feet and fingers from nails that had been pulled off, broken bones, cuts about the head. Some had to be supported by others in order to walk at all. Beards of the priests had been torn. The chains rattled accentuating the ghostly silence. And at the end of the procession came the Armenian archbishop Maloyan who was handcuffed, barefoot and limping after his feet had been whipped in the torture form known as *bastinado*. All of the men in this first deportation from Mardin were killed at separate places in the night between June 10 and 11. Some at Ömer-Agha water spring, some were killed at the caves by the cult-place of Sheykhān, some at the ruins of the Zarzavan fort. Their families in Mardin were told that the prisoners had arrived safely at their destination. No one believed this. There were few Mardin families that did not lose a member on that night. As an announcement of the start of a coming reign of terror, this death march through the centre of town including the Armenian archbishop could hardly have been improved. The silent march in clanking chains on the main street through the Muslim and then Christian quarters polarized the population along religious grounds. To all it was ob-

vious that the government through the presence of the police chief and the soldiers had targeted the Christians. In Mardin's case this meant not just Armenians but also Syriacs, Catholics and Protestants were considered by the local authorities to be treated with equal brutality. They had been handcuffed and chained like ordinary criminals. The Muslim residents were allowed by the escort to approach the prisoners and abuse them with hate-speech and even throw stones. Thus the local mob came to participate in a scene orchestrated by the authorities. This created allies among the mob as they would in the future need to rationalize their action and judge its morale. They were no longer just bystanders, they were participants, although not the worst kind. The Christians were confined to their houses and could do nothing but wave and weep, in deep fear of what would happen next. The procession became a demonstration of absolute power of some and absolute weakness of the targeted victims. Knowledge of this death-march spread quickly throughout the Ottoman provinces. In Mosul the German diplomat Walter Holstein heard of it from the deposed official Hilmi. He alarmed his ambassador in Istanbul of the on-going "general massacre" and he, in turn wrote to Berlin, and the German government protested strongly to Talaat Pasha, who was then forced to send a reprimand to the governor of Diyarbakir province (who ignored it).

The witnesses interpreted the targeting of Mardin's non-Muslims as an anti-Christian act and the victims were perceived as martyrs to their faiths. There were several local reasons for this conclusion. Foremost was that the group constructed by the authorities included not just Armenians of the Catholic church but also all other Catholics – the Syriacs and the Chaldeans and even the Protestants. As all groups spoke the lo-

cal Arabic dialect and many had Arabic names, the distinguishing feature of Armenian language was lacking. The various Catholic groups had very close relationships, particularly the priests and bishops met often across religious lines. Thus the target group was seen by the victims to be constructed on the grounds of common Christianity and not on the grounds of Armenian ethnic background. Second, the first wave of imprisonment and the death march included many of the highest religious figures in the city. And they were given particularly brutal and humiliating treatment. Third, almost all of the witness testimony that was written down came from the hands of persons who had religious education and they saw the genocide of 1915 in the light of the martyrdom of the early Christian Church in Roman times. They make great issue of the choice given to the prisoners to convert to Islam or to die, and they praise those who chose death rather than convert. And these scenes are told in great detail. Also they give particular place in their chronicles to the wrath of God by striking in 1916 the Ottoman army with the epidemic disease of typhus. The biblical analogies go back to visions of Apocalypse, the end of the world and the coming of the last judgment. This interpretation makes it, however, difficult to find alternative causes of the genocide in these sources. Material, social and economic causes play very little role in the contemporary testimonies. With one exception – the report of Hyacinthe Simon. This gives a very long list of the enormous sums of money that police chief Memduh and sub-province governor Bedri extorted or stole from the wealthy Christian families. That he could complete this very long and detailed list indicates that these stolen sums of money, jewellery and property were common knowledge in Mardin and discussed widely. Those

churchmen who were left in Mardin collected and spent large amounts of money to get Christian hostages released from prisoners or to buy back kidnapped children who were being sold in the market-place.

Witnesses in Mardin describe the step by step process of harassment leading over time from occasional brutal maltreatment to individual acts of murder, and finally to full-scale genocide. This process began with the Turkish declaration of mobilization in August 1914. But with the passing of each month the feeling of a coming catastrophe grew. Archbishop Maloyan predicted his coming murder weeks in advance. In an open letter to his congregation written on May 1, 1915, he spoke of measures taken by the government which would lead either to “extermination or martyrdom”. Others probably shared the same fears. As far as the evidence available shows there was little – maybe only infinitesimal – political agitation that could be used by the government as a pretext for exterminating the Christians. On the contrary, many local officials attested to their loyalty. New officials from outside had to be handpicked for their brutality and groomed for the task of initiating the genocide. Throughout the Christian community fear and terror was widely spread. After the first death marches (there was a second with about 270 prisoners on June 14) and deportations of families (on July 2 of 600 persons, July 17 of 250 persons, August 10 of 600 persons) continued all the way up to September 1915 when there were very few “Armenians” left in place. The instigators and perpetrators had grown very rich living on the bribes and confiscated property of the victims. None of the perpetrators was ever tried. And there is as yet no monument to those just officials who tried to defend the Armenians.

Let us finish with the words of Jacques Rhétoré as to why he had written in such detail of the persecutions of 1915:

The most important thing is not to let these memories be forgotten. I have written down as well as I could. I hope the reader will find what I wished to convey, that is first of all the horror over the terrible crimes that were committed, with an appeal to God's and people's judgment over those who so turned against their humanity by ordering and perpetrating them. After that comes my admiration for the victims, who in such high degree honoured humanity.

Azakh – a Center of Resistance

The previous section dealt with an important multi-religious city in which Christians of all denominations were slaughtered and deported in a systematic genocide. I will now describe a completely different situation, namely that of a village that managed to defend itself against attacks throughout 1915. This is the large village of Azakh, now renamed *dil*, situated east of Mardin and close to Turkey's border with Syria. This example shows the great concern at the highest Ottoman political and military level dedicated to annihilating a militarily completely unimportant place, but populated with Christians who refused to die without a battle.

Late in November 1915 Kamil Pasha, the Commander of the Ottoman Third Army wrote to Enver Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of War, that his troops had unfortunately been forced to abort their siege of the Syriac and Chaldean village of Azakh. It had proved a military fiasco once the defenders "Syriacs (*Süryani*) who are native to the area, joined by a small number of Armenians and Chaldeans who escaped from here and there" had caused many Ottoman casualties through a surprise attack. Azakh

was one of the last pockets of a widespread resistance in what the Ottoman authorities called the Midyat rebellion, named after the main Christian town in the Tur Abdin region. General Kamil Pasha argued for postponing any further engagement until a more opportune moment, stating that Minister of War Enver Pasha himself could pick the date for the "complete destruction of the rebellion". Just the day before Enver Pasha issued an order that the rebels must be "suppressed immediately and with the utmost severity". But the commander of the troops besieging the village dared to defy the Minister of War and pulled out.

Conquering this village had become a question of prestige for the highest military authority, but inciting the local Muslims had been difficult and slow. Already in April 1915 Diyarbakir's CUP National Assemblyman Feyzi Bey (who had also agitated against the Christians of Mardin) had been sent by provincial governor Reshid Bey to pressure local Kurdish tribes to attack the non-Muslim population. The composition of the non-Muslim population was a mosaic of sects: the majority belonged to the Syriac Orthodox Church, but there were sizeable communities of Chaldeans, a few Protestant communities, a sprinkle of Armenians and Yezidis, as well as Jewish communities (the latter were the only non-Muslims spared). The local government knew very well that few of these Christians were Armenians and thus were not part of the central government's anti-Armenian program. Therefore the start of the massacres of the non-Armenian Christians should probably be seen as a local initiative with local background.

By May 1915 signs of a coming attack were obvious and the Christian villagers prepared their defence and many farmers from the outlying hamlets streamed into

Azakh, traditionally a place that was easiest to defend. Kurdish tribes and local militias began to conquer and destroy small Christian villages in June and continued to do so into July. The easiest targets fell first and the extent of the destruction proceeded from the north to the south. As one of the southernmost defended villages Azakh was surrounded relatively late, in mid-August. By that time almost all neighbouring villages with a Christian population had been destroyed or abandoned, the main Syriac town of Midyat had fallen after a week-long street-battle and the only other villages that still held out against the enemy was 'Iwardo (now Gülgöze) just north of Midyat, Hah (now Anıtlı) further north-east of Midyat, and Basibrin (now Haberli) between Midyat and Azakh.

The killing of non-Armenian Christians came to the attention of the German army and the German diplomatic service and they informed Berlin of what they considered a breach of the tacit agreement to only target Armenians. The German consul in Mosul, Walther Holstein, was well informed and formulated the first of many German diplomatic protests. He wrote that what the Ottomans deemed was a rebellion was a “direct consequence of the extreme actions of the governor of Diyarbakir against Christians in general.” He insisted that Syriacs and Chaldeans are only “trying to save their skins”. The German ambassador to Turkey quickly informed the German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg of the new situation.

At the beginning of this month [July] the governor of Diyarbakir, Reshid Bey, started a systematic extermination of the Christian population of his jurisdiction, without difference to race or confession. Of these particularly the Catholic Armenians of Mardin and Tel-Armen and the Chaldean Christians and non-Uniate

Syriacs [that is Syriac Orthodox] in the districts of Midyat, Jezire, and Nisibin have been victim.

The first attack on Azakh came on August 18 with an assembly of Kurdish tribes, which failed, as did all the following Kurdish attempts. After suffering heavy casualties the tribes withdrew in early September. The civil authorities, however, did not abandon their intention to eliminate the non-Armenian Christians. They began to pressure the Ottoman army to destroy the resisting Christian villages, which they deceitfully designated as populated by “rebellious Armenians”. From this moment on, the suppression of Azakh passed from the hands of the civil officials to that of the military. General Halil, War Minister Enver Pasha’s uncle, was passing through the area with an army division on its way to Bagdad. Local authorities told Halil that up to “one thousand armed Armenians had gathered lately and started an assault destroying Muslim villages nearby and massacred their inhabitants”. Travelling in the same direction was a secret Turkish-German expeditionary force destined to infiltrate Iran. Head of the expeditionary force was Ömer Naci Bey, until recently the CUP general inspector for Anatolia and considered one of the founding fathers of Turkey’s intelligence agency. The German contingent was led by Max von Scheubner-Richter, once German vice-consul in Erzurum (and in the early 1920s one of Adolf Hitler’s closest aides), assisted by Paul Leverkuehn who wrote a biography of Scheubner and became Nazi Germany’s spy chief in Turkey during the Second World War. This high-level expeditionary force of 650 cavalry and two pieces of field artillery was diverted to Azakh with instructions to suppress the rebels who were accused of “cruelly massacring the Muslim people in the area.” To make a quick end of it even more troops were amas-

sed. On October 29, 1915, Naci requested reinforcement with a battalion from the Fifty-First Division, other troops were sent on their way from the Fourth Army. Minister of Interior Talaat Pasha ordered five hundred *mujahideen* (jihadists) warriors under his command to assist Naci.

The German reaction to this intermezzo was negative and Scheubner-Richter would not permit any of his German staff to participate. According to his biographer Leverkusen, he was in no way convinced by the Turkish description. Rather, he had the view that this was not a real rebellion but concerned a not unjustified defence by people who feared meeting the same fate as most Armenians. If the Germans participated now, the Turks would not shrink from intimating that it was they who had led the atrocities against the Christian Turkish subjects.

The Germans discussed the issue at the highest level: General Field Marshal Colmar von der Goltz, highest German military advisor in Turkey, and the ambassador in Constantinople Konstantin von Neurath consulted with Chancellor Bettmann-Hollweg on how to react to the dramatic expansion of the Armenian issue by targeting other Christians in Anatolia. Neurath wrote:

The request of the Field Marshal was caused by the expedition against a number of Christians of Syriac confession that had been planned for a long time. They are allied with the Armenians and have fortified themselves in difficult terrain between Mardin and Midyat in order to get away from the massacres that the governor of Diyarbakir has organized.

General von der Goltz refused all participation of German military. Later on, Scheubner-Richter reflected that the Turkish pressure for German participation in the attack on Azakh was probably a trap to get the Ger-

mans further involved in the anti-Christian repression.

After acquainting himself with the situation and meeting leaders from Azakh, Naci also began to have his doubts. The defenders were definitely not Armenians. However, on the night between November 13 and 14, fighters from Azakh used a tunnel to make a surprise attack on the Turkish soldiers as they were sleeping. A large but unspecified number of the soldiers and officers were killed and the Azakh warriors carried away many modern weapons. After this there was no way the Turks could win, and time was running short for the secret mission to Iran. Naci began to negotiate a truce in order to withdraw in some honour: the people of Azakh agreed to pay back taxes and give supplies and stolen weapons to the army. Naci began to withdraw. Surprised by this turn of events General Kamil, his direct commander, and Minister of War Enver Pasha ordered Naci to remain in place and continue the siege with the aim of crushing the resistance. Naci defied these orders, which only he could do since he had such high credentials within the CUP.

I have here described three different local parts of the Seyfo genocide. They come from just one province, Diyarbakir, but there are many more examples that there was no place for here. Worth further interest are the genocidal activities at the city of Siirt in Bitlis province, the violent ethnic cleansing of the Assyrians from the Hakkari Mountains, the slaughter of Armenian and Assyrian farmers in the Iranian district of Urmia.

Conclusion

Is there a pattern to be found? First, the sacking of Helwa and the neighbouring Syriac farm villages combined with the considerable military resources dedicated to destroying Azakh, indicate that the government inten-

ded to fully eradicate the Christian population of the countryside, leaving only Muslims.

Second, those Turkish officials who opposed the eradication of the Christians probably were loyal to the idea of a multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire or had morals that prohibited killing innocent people even if of a different religion. These officials were removed from their posts and some were even assassinated in order to make way for persons whose commitment to genocide was solid.

From the evidence presented here it should be clear that the Armenian Genocide was more than just Armenian, but included all Oriental Christians. I think we can see this as part of a radical political idea to totally change the social and economic structure of Anatolia by eradicating the old Ottoman society in a spirit of revolution.

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The Swedish Mayrik

Saving Armenian Mothers and Orphans 1902–1941

Maria Småberg

The Swedish missionary Alma Johansson was one of a remarkable number of Scandinavian single women, educated as nurses or teachers, who volunteered as relief workers during the Armenian refugee crisis.¹ These women missionaries were often seen as mothers, “mayriks” in Armenian, who were “saving a whole generation”.² Alma Johansson was sent out by the organization *Kvinnliga Missionsarbetare* (Women Missionary Workers), K.M.A., in 1902 to work among Armenian women and orphans in the aftermath of the massacres in the 1890’s. She then cared for mothers and children in various ways. She worked in different orphanages in Mezreh and Mush until 1915. As a nurse she also saw the special needs of women and therefore decided to become a midwife. After the war she worked with Armenian refugees in Constantinople and Thessaloniki where she started schools for children. In her work in the refugee camps she also focused on self-help projects for Armenian women, so they could become bread-winners and take care of their children themselves. Thus, Alma Johansson became an external mother for many of the Armenian orphans and a support to Armenian mothers.

In humanitarian settings, mothers are exposed to specific challenges as mothers. Child birth, breast feeding, diseases and the

risk of rape and other violations when leaving home in order to take care of their families make them especially vulnerable in violent conflicts. Since the mothers sustain whole communities, targeting civilian women is also an efficient way to destroy a local society. Saving mothers and children in humanitarian crises is therefore in the spotlight today as never before.³ These maternal aspects has, however, to only a lesser degree been the focus for research on the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath, although the majority of the survivors were women and children. Hence it is important to highlight mothers and mothering within humanitarian work from this specific historical context.

The witness narratives of Alma Johansson shed light on the values and practices of *mothering* within humanitarian work. She was perceived as a “mayrik”, but I am also interested in her concern for Armenian mothers and how she created bonds of solidarity between Swedish and Armenian mothers. Thus, from the case of Alma Johansson, I will discuss and analyse mothering in a humanitarian setting and connect it with moral cosmopolitanism – the awareness that all humans belong to a single community based on relationships of mutual respect and responsibility.

Mothers are often connected to biology, family and nation.⁴ However, in this article

I want to broaden these connotations and explore how mothering is also a social practice performed in both the private and public realms as well as in a global context. I am in particular interested in such *mothering that crosses boundaries of care* in spite of differences of nationality, culture and religion.

Alma Johansson – a Cosmopolitan

When Alma Johansson (1881–1974) left home to become a missionary, she did so with a Christian universal ideal of helping a people in need regardless of their nationality. We can also see how she cooperated with various missionary and secular humanitarian organizations from different countries. She learned to speak German, English, French, and Armenian on top of the Scandinavian languages. She also took lessons in Turkish. In many senses she became a cosmopolitan.

Johansson grew up under poor conditions as a farmer's daughter. At the age of 19 she received her missionary calling when she heard the news about the sufferings of the Armenians. Johansson enlisted for K.M.A., a Protestant organization formed in 1894 by Swedish women for work among women in foreign countries. She then started out with one year of training at a German Missionary school. In Turkey, she first worked at a Danish orphanage and later at a German orphanage in Mezreh 1902–1907. The orphanages were related to the German organization *Deutscher Hülfsbund für Christliches Liebeswerk im Orient*. After her training in Stockholm and Geneva to become a midwife, she travelled east again to work in Mush together with the Norwegian missionary and nurse Bodil Biørn in 1910–1915. They became heads of another orphanage established by *Deutscher Hülfsbund*.

Like many foreign missionaries and diplomats, Johansson was caught in the middle of the violence and was then forced to take

on wider tasks and develop other skills than what she had primarily been sent out for. At the time of the genocide, the children of the orphanage were trapped and locked into a house, which was set on fire. Devastated from not having been able to protect “her” children, Johansson set out on a dangerous trip through a war-torn Turkey in order to reach Constantinople and make her report. Her testimony to Western diplomats was soon published, together with other reports. She also published her story as a book and wrote many articles.⁵

After some years in Sweden, recovering from her traumatic experiences during the genocide, Johansson returned to Turkey in 1920 together with the Danish missionary Wilhelmine Grünhagen. They hoped to reach Cilicia, but the missionaries were forbidden to go there. She then remained in Constantinople, working with the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* among Armenian refugees on the outskirts of the city.

When coming into contact with the secular American organization *Near East Relief*, NER, Alma Johansson got the opportunity to begin relief and missionary work in Thessaloniki, Greece, where the Americans had a station. NER withdrew from there in 1924, after which K.M.A. continued the work independently. Johansson worked in company with her Armenian assistants Sefora⁶ and Asnif,⁷ the British Jewish missionary doctor John Goldstein and for shorter periods with the Swedish K.M.A. sisters Mathilda Andersson and Beatrice Jönsson.⁸ She was also in close contact with the Danish industrial mission in Thessaloniki and with German missionaries, whom she for example visited and travelled with on vacations.⁹

Through her work, Johansson was thus part of a transnational humanitarian network that worked among Armenian refu-

gees in the Middle East. The relief work has been called the first humanitarian intervention in modern times. What, then, was the background of this grand endeavour?

The Humanitarian Protection of Armenian Mothers and Children

Between one and two million Armenians were killed in the Ottoman Empire in 1915–1917. Stereotyping and prejudice against the Christian communities developed and formed fierce identity politics. Katharine Derderian argues that not only nationalist identity politics, but also gender was central in the Armenian Genocide. We find a very early differentiation between men and women in Ottoman policy. Most of the men were arrested and executed at an early stage as a systematic elimination of the Armenian military-aged male population, while women were forced out on death marches in the deserts. Many women, children and elderly died in the deserts from starvation, disease or suicide. Women and girls were also raped, kidnapped, and forced into marriage and sex slavery. When there were no men to protect them or no organized female resistance, women and children became defenceless targets to the persecutions.¹⁰

From witness reports we know of the brutality that both women and children faced during the death marches. For example, soldiers cut up the stomach of many pregnant women in order to stop new Armenian babies from being born. Many Armenian women gave birth during the marches but were forced to continue the walk soon after the delivery. Several mothers were also forced to see their children die or to give them away or sell them in order to survive.¹¹

NER, one of the main actors, was formed in 1915 to act for the Armenians and was the first broad national appeal to solicit funds from the American public for a suf-

fering people.¹² The campaign was unique in its use of media outlets and support from celebrity spokespeople and citizen volunteers alike. This effort grew and gave birth to what is now known as “citizen philanthropy”, appealing directly to the public to support humanitarian work overseas – a model today being used by a majority of non-profit organizations around the world. Armenian mothers and children were in focus of these outlets.

The League of Nations formed a commission in 1921 for the liberation of women and children in the Near East (the Fifth Committee on the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey, Asia Minor and the Neighbouring Territories).¹³ Danish aid worker Karen Jeppe was elected commissioner and about 1,900 women and girls out of 90,000 were rescued or rescued themselves from Arab, Kurdish and Turkish households. Feminist organizations, including the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, were also engaged.

There was also a strong sense of belief in Britain in the Armenian cause, which shaped British foreign and military policy in the Near East; they shared a distant religious and cultural past. The Eastern Christians were oppressed and persecuted minorities worthy of sympathy and material support. Moreover, British humanitarianism had already been gendered in the 19th century. British women activists urged women to participate in helping their persecuted Armenian sisters.¹⁴

Women in Scandinavia were also moved by the fate of their Armenian sisters. Apart from Alma Johansson, for example Maria Jacobsen, Amalia Lange, Karen Marie Petersen, Jenny Jensen and Hansine Marcher from Denmark, and Bodil Biørn and Thora von Wedel-Jarlsberg from Norway also participated in the K.M.A. work among the

Armenians. It is worth noting that these care-giving women never received the same recognition as the men, who instead worked with a more abstract approach to the humanitarian issues. Woodrow Wilson, Hjalmar Branting and Fridtjof Nansen were even awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.¹⁵ It is therefore important to recognize and upgrade the role of missionary women as international actors within historiography. Working practically with mothering and care in a local context did not mean that they were not able to also put their work within a wider cosmopolitan setting.

The missionaries mothered Armenian children, empowered Armenian mothers, and turned Scandinavian women into foster mothers. They saved lives during the war through nourishing and nursing, negotiating with officials and hiding the persecuted. They tried to make the genocide known through writing articles and giving lectures. After the war they helped refugees to find their way in a new situation through establishing health institutions, schools, industrial missions and agricultural colonies – so that the survivors could build a new life and a future for themselves and their children. Back home, Scandinavian women read about the work in witness accounts by the missionaries and they themselves helped by donating money, collecting clothes and buying Armenian needlework.¹⁶ We will now look closer into the narratives of Alma Johansson and in what ways this work can be perceived with a mothering lens.

Mothering Armenian Orphans

Inger Marie Okkenhaug argues that the Armenian Genocide led to a “tremendous need for external ‘mothers’ – to feed, shelter and bring up the many young children without guardians.” She means that the women missionaries are often portrayed as

“mothers of a nation” when “saving the remnants of the Armenian nation”.¹⁷ Many of the missionaries also adopted Armenian children as their own.¹⁸

However, Okkenhaug also finds contradictions in the images of the mothers. In interviews with Armenian children brought up in Maria Jacobsen’s orphanage *The Bird’s Nest* in Beirut, it is obvious that although she was called “Mama”, she did not give priority to mothering. “Maria Jacobsen was busy administrating and could not be a ‘mayrik’. She was the captain.”¹⁹ In fact Jacobsen was head of the largest orphanage in the Middle East, which was a very demanding job. Bodil Biørn, on the other hand, was more of a mother, according to Okkenhaug. Biørn was in charge of a smaller operation and had therefore more time to build personal relationships with the children. At the same time, a small boy in the orphanage saw Biørn as something different from a regular mother when calling her “baron mayrig” (Mr. Mother). Thus, Okkenhaug concludes that Western women being in charge were not only seen as mothers, but also as having male roles.²⁰

In order to understand the mothering of Alma Johansson, I will take departure in the thinking of Sara Ruddick who discusses three basic activities of mothering which are necessary for a child to survive and develop: *preservation* (looking after basic needs), *growth* (fostering and educating) and *acceptability* (responding to a child in his/her terms). Above all, mothering is about building the relationship with the child on attentive love and trust.²¹ However, mothering is not necessarily part of female essentialism, but rather a socially-constructed relationship that can be performed by other women and men as well.

PRESERVATION

Within K.M.A., it was important to describe Alma Johansson in maternal terms. The K.M.A co-founder and co-worker, baroness Sigrid Kurck writes that Johansson “after a while became ‘mayrik’ for a crowd of seventy boys aged 1,5–8 years old.” Alma Johansson herself notes:

It was a happy time. It was certainly tense, both day and night, and I often made the night become day, but I never found the work difficult.²²

Johansson often expressed her love for children when describing them as “sweet” and “precious”.²³ She also had a foster child, Dufwa, in Mezreh. However, when she went back to Stockholm for studies in 1907, she left the girl behind in the orphanage.²⁴ Thus, there were certain limits to an external mother.

Both in the orphanages in Turkey as well as in her work in the refugee camps, Johansson provided children with food, health care, clothes, and protection. For example, Alma Johansson describes how she, when the violence reached Mush during the genocide, tried to protect the orphanage as much as she could. It was a difficult task. She writes about how she closed the gate together with two other women. They then were shot at and the other women were hit. One of them died immediately, the other was badly injured and died later among her friends inside the orphanage.²⁵

She also writes about the hard conditions in the refugee camps. How the refugees were lacking food and clothing. Children died of diseases such as fevers and typhus from starvation and there was a constant need for medicines and health care.²⁶

Mothers have sunk under the great demands. In the brother country – Greece – one has not

managed to give bread to each mother who have asked for bread for their little ones.²⁷

From the opening of the first K.M.A. school in Thessaloniki in 1927, Johansson decided to serve food every day and she writes how the school children then became much healthier.²⁸

EDUCATION AND GROWTH

The fostering and education of Armenian children was a task of priority within the missionary work. Both in the orphanages in Turkey and in the K.M.A. schools in the refugee camps in Thessaloniki it was especially important to give the children a Christian education. In Johansson’s eyes, it was a way of preventing immorality:

It is hopeless to see the children without a school. They become so wild. /.../ Again and again we see how important it is to take good care of the children. /.../ It is all too painful to see how children of a Christian people return to a natural state.²⁹

For a missionary, it was not enough to provide the children with material and physical aid, they also needed moral and spiritual support.

Within the work of Johansson was also a great emphasis on saving a nation and its cultural heritage through education. This becomes especially evident in her reports on the education in the K.M.A. schools after the war. Johansson writes in 1922:

It is marvellous indeed that Armenians are so eager to learn. /.../ But if the Armenians are going to take their place among the nations, they must be made capable of that.³⁰

In the K.M.A. schools in Thessaloniki, the children learned Greek and Armenian.³¹ Even if the refugees now lived in Greece,

and they themselves spoke Turkish from the time when they lived in Turkey, they gave priority to an education in Armenian for their children.

When Alma Johansson promoted an Armenian education, she respected in this way the right to a particular cultural attachment. She was not there to give them education on Swedish standards. She wanted them to keep their Armenian identity and at the same time be able to get along in a new home country. Johansson's work was in line with Armenian community activists in several countries as well as the League of Nations and NER that set up orphanages in various cities of the Middle East in order to preserve the Armenian national identity.³²

ACCEPTABILITY

For Johansson, it was also important to respond to the children in their own terms. Attentiveness and trust was a basic element for this. When working at the orphanage in Mush, she writes:

I truly feel how much I love them. They come to me in the evenings to say good night and then they expect Mayrik to have some spare time for them. We then have both funny and serious conversations. Yes, there are many happy moments in work! ³³

Johansson often comes back in her writings to the many traumas of the youth from the days of the genocide.³⁴ She also writes about their hopeless situation and how hard it is to find a job.

No wonder they become lazy? The best time of these young men and young women is wasted, and there is a real risk that they enter into bad paths in life. /.../ The Armenians are no saints, although they have suffered a lot for their faith – they have many shortcomings, but they are a

hard-tested people, worthy of our compassion and our help as they are sharing the same precious faith.³⁵

The moral and respectable life is put at danger among the youth, but they should be met with sympathy and mercy, not moralizing. After all, they were fellow Christians.

Alma Johansson also helped the children to become independent and to take care of themselves. During the German occupation of Greece during the Second World War, Armenians were sent to work in German factories. Alma reported in her letters to the Swedish readers that the Armenians were doing well there, that they were appreciated and well regarded workers.³⁶ Wehanusch, one of the young women, started to work in a factory in Württemberg. She wrote to Johansson in 1943 and describes their difficulties in life, but also how most of them have found a way to make a living and how they are capable of helping each other. She also remembers the time with Alma Johansson in Thessaloniki:

Soon it is Christmas again. 'Wondering what I get for Christmas by Majrig this year', we used to say at this time of the year. Yes, it was a happy time we had together. Now I am a stranger again. I often sing 'I am a pilgrim'. Yes, Majrig, I still love to sing 'Jerusalem', but always with tears, because the memories overwhelm me. How we sang that song at your place.³⁷

Here, Wehanusch expresses gratitude to Johansson for providing her and her friends with a kind of shelter or haven during the hard conditions in the refugee camps in Thessaloniki. She also calls Johansson "Majrig". This care work performed in close relations seemed to have helped them to stand on their own feet.

Long-distance Mothering

Mothering in a public sense was at the centre for philanthropists who tried to promote morality and create better homes and stable families in Sweden during the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th.³⁸ Philanthropic organizations educated poor mothers, but also offered concrete help in nurseries and with breast-feeding. Unmarried women could practice mothering as “social mothers” in schools, hospitals and prisons. Social mothers should also promote peace. For these reasons, the society needed good mothering.³⁹ Mothering also functioned as a glue for an international identity which, among others, the international women’s peace movements tried to create.⁴⁰

Within K.M.A. we can find a transnational link between Swedish and Armenian mothers and children through material and emotional support and exchanges. Christian mission movements involved themselves not only in activities on the field, but also at home.⁴¹ Alma Johansson’s books and many articles in the K.M.A. magazine *När & Fjärran* are examples of such contributions. So are all the lecture tours she made when being on vacation at home. When Swedish women read about her work and the many Armenian life-stories, they themselves took action. The Swedish K.M.A. sent clothes, food and money to Johansson in the field, who, together with her local assistants, distributed the material support among Armenians in need.⁴² They organized a system where they gave tickets to the people in need, so the distribution in this way could be as fair and reach as many as possible. Johansson writes how she could “feel the love” within each package sent from Sweden and how the Swedish goods were well received and appreciated.⁴³ The aid had personal touches. It was also directed to children. Swedish K.M.A sent baby clothes to Thes-

saloniki. But Johansson also mentions how she sent Armenian needle work, such as blankets to baby strollers, to be sold in Sweden. There was in this sense an exchange of baby items.

In order to reach out to Swedish women, K.M.A. had its own publishing company and chronicle.⁴⁴ Through so-called book stations in over 100 places all over the country, they spread literature and booklets. They also arranged meetings for women, youth and children. For example they gave lantern lectures and organized sewing groups and other events. Every year they arranged a so called “Day of privation” (*För-sakelsedagen*), usually on All Saints’ Day, for the Armenian cause. It was a day of information, fundraising and prayer. So called Golden Rule dinners with just a simple dish served as a concrete way to show solidarity. Many Swedish families also had Armenian “foster children” whom they supported economically. The exchange of letters was common.⁴⁵

In some articles Swedish mothers are asked as mothers to engage for a child or to support an Armenian mother financially. Johansson writes:

All happy mothers, think of the many mothers here who almost succumb, but all the same are driven by the wish to foster their children to Christian and capable persons.⁴⁶

The Swedish mother is also asked to foster her own children to engage for others less fortunate.⁴⁷

The transmission of moral and material support over national and cultural borders between K.M.A. in Sweden and its local branch in Thessaloniki was also complemented with actions taken on an international level. K.M.A sent a joint petition from all the Scandinavian branches to the League

of Nations in 1921 “on help and protection to the unhappy people of Armenia”.⁴⁸ Alma Johansson was in close contact with Sigrid Kurck, who was also the head of the Swedish Armenian Committee and a delegate of the *International Near East Association* (I.N.E.A.) in Geneva, which was founded in 1922 in order to, among other things, lobby in the League of Nations.⁴⁹ Thus, we can see a link to the international arena.

Empowering Armenian Mothers

The ideology of “national reconstruction” was strong within the Armenian communities in the Middle East as a response to the genocide. The efforts were focused on orphans and women without a family. There was a strong inclination both in speeches by the responsible leaders of the time and in the Armenian press to rebuild the Armenian nation. During this national regeneration, defending, caring for and educating the orphans and women in an Armenian environment became an act of “cleansing” from the “turkification” they had been subjected to.⁵⁰

The rehabilitation attempts of Armenian women were however haunted with contradictions. The Armenian women were in one way conceived as national mothers in national rhetoric. As mothers and wives they were expected to preserve and restore the national existence through their purity – clinging to religion, language, family and morale – and fertility, giving birth to more children. At the same time the Armenian society was uncertain about the possibility to “cleanse” the women abducted to rape and prostitution. The community also ignored the socio-psychological aspects which led many Armenian girls and women to isolate themselves from or abandon their national community for fear of stigmatization. Especially, there was a severe and intole-

rant attitude towards a mother with a child born to a Muslim father. Even if the child was born out of a forced marriage or rape, it was often rejected by the mother’s family and even in orphanages and shelters.⁵¹ Many Armenian women therefore stayed in their new Muslim families to the effect that many Turks today actually have Armenian grandmothers.

Alma Johansson describes how the violence during the genocide was directed against women and how they were victims of rape, prostitution and forced marriages.⁵² After the war she also writes about how surviving Armenian women continued their lives and made a living for themselves and their families. Their situation was not easy at all since most of them came to live under extremely difficult and poor conditions in refugee camps far away. As refugees they were uprooted from their homes and livelihoods, often separated from their families. Johansson writes:

Many mothers are real heroines. What do we know of their tears, prayers and anguish! /.../ They have been living in an abnormal situation for 18 years now. If you and I were one of them, how would we be?⁵³

In another article she describes how a mother who is ill in tuberculosis in desperation tries to strangle her two little boys.⁵⁴ Moreover, Johansson writes about a woman who breast-feeds a two-year-old child: “When we have nothing to eat, it calms the little one somehow”.

When describing the surviving Armenian women refugees, she continues to represent them as pitiful victims who lacked hope. However, empathic listening, education and handicraft enterprises could bring hope and emancipation to them – they were in fact not helpless! Thus, after the genocide we

find a shift in the images of the Armenian women where their strength is emphasized.

For example, after an encounter with women who had been through the desert marches, Johansson nevertheless sees signs of hope:

I think it is God's great mercy that they do not become dull and emotionless. When they hear that I also had to share a little of their suffering, and feel that I have deep compassion for them, then we are not strangers to each other.⁵⁶

Empathic listening could help these women to find new courage in life, in Johansson's view. When listening to another life-story of suffering, she writes that she "feels like standing on a tear stained hallowed ground."⁵⁷ She also describes significant emotional attachments between herself as care giver and the Armenian care receivers. They are not distant strangers to each other.

Education and help to self-help in order to manage on one's own were important aims within the relief work among Armenian refugees. Johansson writes for example about a young and sick widow with her little 7-year-old son who sews handkerchiefs:

It is a pleasure to receive her work, because it is so clean and well made. Sometimes she does not have the strength to do more than two handkerchiefs a week and they cannot live on that. So I give them a bit extra. She is such a sweet and fine woman and she raises her son so well, it is a delight to see him.⁵⁸

Alma Johansson started meetings for mothers each Monday where they were taught to read and founded an industry mission for women. In these projects she collaborated with local people and organizations. A mothering attitude among the Armenian teachers in the schools was for example

stressed. In 1927 Johansson writes about the teacher Mary Mordjickian and how the children liked her "maternal character".⁵⁹ In fact, Armenian women could also become social mothers.

Johansson stressed the point that the industry mission made women breadwinners.⁶⁰ Johansson finds it difficult to understand the Greek restrictions that prevented Armenians to find a work.⁶¹ The Armenian women had a great potential in the eyes of Johansson, but were restricted by their status as stateless. At the end, migration turned out to be the solution for them. At first, members of families sent money home from their work in for example Germany and France. After the war, though, there was no other way than to leave Thessaloniki for good. Johansson's assistant Sefora and her family were among the last to leave in 1947 for Soviet Armenia. Almost no Armenians stayed behind.⁶²

Medina Haeri and Nadine Puechguirbal hold that the images used by many humanitarian actors to describe women's war-time experiences are constituted by a homogenous group, who along with children and the elderly, are the most vulnerable and helpless victims of armed conflicts. In reality, it is important to remember how women show remarkable courage and resilience in coping with their serious challenges of trauma and survival. They take care of their children and serve as anchors for their families. They also find ways to help each other and find strength together.⁶³ Both the specific challenges and vulnerabilities of women, but also their perseverance and capacity to confront and surmount the hardships of war and genocide must be acknowledged.

From National to Cosmopolitan Mothers
Humanitarianism is always ambivalent. Foreign missionaries and aid workers helped

hundreds of thousands of Armenians to survive and make a living, “saving an entire generation”. At the same time we see how paternalism, turning the Armenians into objects of rescue and help from experts from the outside, was part of the humanitarian work.

Humanitarianism also involves maternal aspects which are important to recognize. In this article I have emphasized mothering as a social practice in a global setting. For Alma Johansson it was important to appear as an external mother, but also to appeal to both Armenian and Swedish mothers alike. In her mothering we can find ambivalence, though, of closeness and distance. She emphasized the importance of context, interdependence, relationships and responsibilities to concrete others. At the same time she describes the Armenian mothers and children as deserving poor, worthy of help since they are Christians. The assumption that women have distinct nurturing skills primarily associated with mothering experiences can also be contested, but was part of the contemporary discourse.

The example of Alma Johansson shows that it is possible to perceive care-givers – external mothers – as cosmopolitan actors. Johansson did not stay within the private sphere of personal relationships in a local context. She crossed national, cultural and religious boundaries of care and searched for these close relations with concrete others in an international context. She also wanted to make the sufferings of the Armenians known to the public, to create compassion and make people act. The close relationships became a foundation for Armenians to help themselves, which made for sustainability.

At the same time, Alma Johansson has been perceived as a national mother by many Armenians. It has been difficult for certain groups to view their own Armenian women as national mothers because they had been raped and defiled. Maybe it is easier to describe an external mother as Alma Johansson as a national mother? However, it is a sign of cosmopolitanism within Armenian circles when embracing a Swedish missionary as their national mother.

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Endnotes

- 1 The Genocide Museum Institute in Yerevan, Armenia, for example, has highlighted the Scandinavian response to the Armenian Genocide in exhibitions, books and memorial ceremonies. See www.genocide-museum.am/eng/21.04.2011.php.
- 2 Okkenhaug, “Scandinavian Missionaries”, 88–91.
- 3 *State of the World’s Mothers report 2014*.
- 4 Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*.
- 5 When Alma Johansson wrote about her field work, she had mainly a Swedish readership of K.M.A. donors in view, as her articles were published in *När & Fjärran* (Close & Far). Her books *Ett folk i landsflykt* (A people in exile, 1930) and *Armeniskt flyktingliv* (Life of Armenian Refugees, 1931), were also published by K.M.A. in Stockholm. Johansson’s reports to diplomats were, on the other hand, published internationally in the collection of the German theologian Johannes Lepsius and in the 1916 British report *The Treatments of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–16*, also known as *The Blue Book*, by the British historian Arnold Toynbee and the politician Lord James Bryce.
- 6 Sefora at first took care of Johansson’s household and later became a so-called Bible woman, making visits to Armenian homes in the barracks.
- 7 Asnif was the head of the industrial mission.
- 8 Mathilda Andersson worked with Johansson for three months in 1926 and Beatrice Jönsson between 1930 and 1932. Both had real problems adjusting to the harsh conditions in the refugee camps and became ill and depressed. See K.M.A. collection, National Archives, Co443, F3a:1.
- 9 See Bjørnlund & Hendel Philipsen, “Sorrow is Turned to Joy”, on the work of the Danish industrial mission *Industrimissionen i Armenien* (IM).
- 10 Derderian, *Common Fate, Different Experience*, 2–6.
- 11 Karlsson, *De som är oskyldiga idag ...*, 125–130.
- 12 *Near East Relief* was promoted by President Woodrow Wilson and funded by the American state, turning former missionary work into secular NGOs. See Tejrjian, “Faith of Our Fathers”.
- 13 Watenpugh, “The League of Nations’ Rescue”.

- 14 Tusan, *Smyrna's Ashes*, 35–39.
- 15 Woodrow Wilson initiated the Near East Relief. Swedish Social-Democratic leader Hjalmar Branting, later Prime Minister of Sweden, participated in the Swedish debate on the fate of the Armenians and was among the first to use the term genocide in 1917. Norwegian explorer, diplomat and humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen helped many Armenian refugees with the so called “Nansen passports” and he was also engaged for an independent Armenian national home.
- 16 See Kurck in Johansson, *Ett folk i landsflykt*, 5–6.
- 17 Danish Maria Jacobsen is called “the Mother of thousands of orphans” and “Mama Jacobsen”. Similarly, Danish Karen Jeppe was after her death described as mother in obituaries by Armenians. Okkenhaug, “Scandinavian Missionaries”, 88–91
- 18 Okkenhaug, “Scandinavian Missionaries”, 88–91.
- 19 Okkenhaug, “Scandinavian Missionaries”, 90–91.
- 20 Okkenhaug, “a humble, quiet and serious operation” (forthcoming). Okkenhaug also compares Biørn’s work to that of NER and shows that she wanted to establish “a small, personal and unhurried recovery for the weakest children”, in contrast to NER’s “extremely large, highly efficient and ground-breaking refugee work”. See Okkenhaug, “Refugees, relief and the restoration of a nation”, 225.
- 21 Ruddick, *Maternal thinking*.
- 22 Kurck, “Martyrfolket”, 40–41.
- 23 När & Fjällan, 1907, 11.
- 24 Carlsson, Tiga kan jag inte.
- 25 Johansson, *Ett folk i landsflykt*, 25–30. I analyse this incident more in Småberg, “Witnessing the Unbearable” and develop the theme of protection in Småberg, *The Vulnerable Guardian*.
- 26 När & Fjällan, 1924, 99–101; 1924, 146–147.
- 27 När & Fjällan, 1924, 146–147.
- 28 Johansson, *Armeniskt flyktingliv*, 12. See also När & Fjällan, 1933, 89–90.
- 29 När & Fjällan, 1928, 66.
- 30 När & Fjällan, 1922, 61–62.
- 31 När & Fjällan, 1933, 73–74.
- 32 Üngör, “Orphans, converts and prostitutes”, 175–181. See also Watenpugh, “Are there Any Children for Sale?”
- 33 När & Fjällan, 1913, 6–7.
- 34 När & Fjällan, 1922, 26–28, 47–49, 61–62, 136–137, 1924, 111–114; 1926, 114–117; 1927, 103, 1938, 29; 1945, 133.
- 35 När & Fjällan, 1922, 103–104.
- 36 När & Fjällan 1942, 136.
- 37 När & Fjällan, 1943, 5–6.
- 38 Taussi Sjöberg & Vammen (eds), *På tröskeln till välfärden*.
- 39 Swedish author Ellen Key promoted social mothering in *Barnets århundrade* (1900). See also Tornbjer, *Den nationella modern*; Wikander (ed.), *Det evigt kvinnliga*.

- 40 Rupp, “Constructing Internationalism”, 1582–1586.
- 41 *När & Fjärran*, November 1925, 130–131.
- 42 In *När & Fjärran* were detailed reports published on how the clothes were collected and packed in Stockholm and sent to Thessaloniki on Swedish boats. In its enterprise, K.M.A received help and sponsoring from various Swedish companies. See *När & Fjärran*, November 1925, 130–131.
- 43 *När & Fjärran*, 1925, 39–40; 1930, 27–28.
- 44 K.M.A. had a mission column in YWCA’s chronicle *Hemåt* before it started its own chronicle *När & Fjärran* in 1904.
- 45 See *Trons framsynthet*, 14–15. Children’s books were also spread.
- 46 *När & Fjärran*, 1935, 146–147.
- 47 *När & Fjärran*, 1921, 5–6.
- 48 *När & Fjärran*, 1921, 89–90.
- 49 *När & Fjärran*, 1923, 120–121. I develop the topic of discursive spaces in Småberg, “Witness Narratives”.
- 50 Tachjian, “Gender, nationalism, exclusion”.
- 51 Tachjian, “Gender, nationalism, exclusion”, 67–75. See also Derderian, “Common fate”.
- 52 I develop this theme in Småberg, “Witnessing the Unbearable”.
- 53 *När & Fjärran*, 1934, 9.
- 54 *När & Fjärran*, 1924, 26–27.
- 55 *När & Fjärran*, 1925, 56.
- 56 *När & Fjärran*, 1921, 19–21.
- 57 *När & Fjärran*, 1932, 120.
- 58 *När & Fjärran*, 1927, 56–58.
- 59 *När & Fjärran*, 1927, 141. See also Johansson, “I tjänst bland de förtryckta”, 68, where she writes about the fortune to have “kind teachers who took care of the children as mothers”.
- 60 Johansson, *Armeniskt flyktingliv*, 13.
- 61 Johansson, *Armeniskt flyktingliv*, 8.
- 62 *När & Fjärran*, 1947, 7; 158.
- 63 Haeri & Puechguirbal, “From helplessness to agency”, 104–106.

Making the Unfathomable Known

Göran Gunner

About thirty years ago, I made a couple of trips to Armenia, Anatolia and Eastern Turkey with the explicit purpose of examining what still remained of the more than 2,000 Armenian churches and monasteries that existed in 1915, in what is present day Turkey.

Except for a few churches that were still in use – as in Mardin and Diyarbakir – and a few remaining as historical monuments – as in the ruined city of Ani and the church on the island Aghdamar – the findings were discouraging. Apart from these few exceptions, churches and monasteries had either been completely wiped away, or were existing as a few left-behind stones, or as ruins still telling that at one point in time this had been a church. Let me, as a few examples, mention a ruin in the middle of the plain outside Kars, walls in villages outside Kharpet, or on the far away islands Ktuts (Çarpanak) and Lim (Adır) in Lake Van still visible remains of Armenian monasteries. Some ornamented *khatchkar* – typical Armenian cross-stones – still embedded in a wall or standing in the open, just a few of all the thousands of cross-stones chiselled out as signs of belonging and faith.

Rather few buildings and cross-stones are still to be seen today after what came to be known as the Armenian Genocide – The Year of the Sword, for the Syrians. But the stories from the past continue to live, stories told by survivors and eyewitnesses, passed on from generation to generation. The me-

mories of what happened in the past give a sense of meaning for the children and grand-children of the survivors as well as for the rest of the world trying to grasp the first genocide in the twentieth century.

The headline “Terrible massacres in Armenia” opened an early report in a Swedish daily about what the paper called “ongoing mass murders of Armenians”. The locations mentioned in the short article are places in the eastern Ottoman Empire, such as “Erzurum, Dertsjun, Egin, Bitlis, Mush, Sassun, and other places”.¹ The report was published at the end of May 1915 while the actual event started in the middle of April 1915, one hundred years back in time.

This means that no survivor with memories is still alive. But during the years, eyewitness accounts have been available through diplomatic archives, books, interviews, newspapers and so on. Longer stories, smaller fragments and memories from a historic event create a possibility a hundred years later for historians and other researchers to present a systematic and coherent account, and explain what actually happened. This also gives a kind of meaning for the survivors’ descendants when trying to fathom stories of atrocities and violence, stories inherited in the family as well as told in churches and associations. The accounts and memories give the Armenians, Syrians, and Assyrians living today a sense of proximity to what happened one hundred years ago

and empathy for the individuals, families and the whole collective on whom this befell, but fosters also disappointment when this history is not recognized. Certainly, there are Armenian voices saying that it's better to leave history behind and focus on the present and the future. But among Armenians in Sweden and elsewhere in the Diaspora, the consciousness of what happened is still present as a vivid reality.

In contemporary accounts told in Sweden about what happened the Armenians and other minorities in the Ottoman Empire, at first words like “massacre”, “blood bath” and “mass murder” were used. But very soon the term “genocide” [folk mord] came into use.

Of course, Alma Johansson stands out as a Swedish eyewitness. But since her story is told in another chapter in this book, I will not dwell on it here but present some other Swedes of importance. Even if they were not actually eyewitnesses to the very killings, they lived close to what happened through their work and made public the eyewitness reports they received, or took part in refugee work among the survivors.²

The Missionary Olga Moberg – an Important Voice in Sweden

In the year 1881, the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden [Svenska Missionsförbundet] started a missionary work in the Caucasus. The NAFTA Production Society, run by the Nobel brothers, employed a few hundred Swedes in Baku. The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden was asked to send people to care for the employees' spiritual welfare. Soon the work was extended into activities which, inter alia, included Armenians. The Armenian Evangelical Mission Alliance was organized in 1887 with Sarkis Hambarsumjanz as the chairperson and with about 1,300 members in places like

Tiflis, Schemacha, Schuscha, Baku, Karakala, Erivan [Yerevan], Etchmiadzin, Korpeli, Gulutjan and Tabris in Persia. In 1915, the Swedish missionaries were E.J. Larsson, Olga Moberg, Elin Sundvall, L.E. Högberg, and the Sarwe family. Local pastors included S. Levonian (Kars, Karakala), S. Sarkisian (Erivan [Yerevan]), Etchmiadzin, Kurpalo, Hadjikara), Ter Asaturians and K.I. Tämros (Tiflis), I. Turmanjanz (Ashkhabad), and P. Tarajanz and Abr. Djehanjanj (Baku). A couple of years later the only Swede still in place was Elin Sundvall. Several of these missionaries were involved in refugee work taking care of survivors escaping over the border into Russia. In articles and books, they also conveyed the stories told by the survivors.

One of the missionaries, Olga Moberg, had been working both in northern Persia and in the Armenian part of Russia with, among others, Yazidies and Armenians. She became well known for the Swedish broader public when bringing the fate of the Armenian people to the public eye. She took the initiative of publishing a book written by an Armenian, M. Piranjan, who worked on behalf of the Zürich relief committee for Armenians. Moberg translated the book into Swedish and convinced the publishing house of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden to print it, titled *Blod och tårar. Armeniernas lidanden i Turkiet* [Blood and Tears. The Sufferings of the Armenians in Turkey]. The book was published already in the beginning of 1917. Olga Moberg wrote an introduction and another missionary, L.E. Högberg, provided a preface dated December 1916.

Olga Moberg writes in her introduction about “horrible atrocities” against Armenians and the “veritable extermination of the Armenians in Turkey” in 1915.³ In his short preface, Högberg makes an important point,

stating that comprehensive, correct information about what has happened to the Armenians will not be available until the war is over but it is already a fact that what is going on in Turkey is an effort to “exterminate an entire nation”, that this “extermination” is already taking place and that the Armenians are being subjected to “unmentionable suffering and horrible torment”. He also vouches for the narrators in the book since he knows several of them personally, guaranteeing them having “impartially put forward the truth”.⁴

Newspaper advertisements for the book labelled it “The news media about *Blood and Tears*”.⁵ The book was included in “youth libraries” in churches around Sweden and a second edition was printed already the same year.

The mayor of Stockholm and a member of parliament, Carl Lindhagen, read the book *Blood and Tears* and took the information to the media, and to the Parliament. It looks like he discussed the matter with the author Marika Stiernstedt, who urged him in a letter to raise the issue of Armenia in the parliament: “One word said in the Swedish parliament, however small its effect, is bound to make many happy and help building up awareness.”⁶ In a debate in the Second chamber [approx. House of commons] in the Swedish parliament on March 23, 1917, Lindhagen proclaimed:

Meanwhile, the common men, women and children of the Armenian people, victims of political conditions but without guilt, have literally waded in their own blood. Many impartial reports are available and recently the Swedish general public has, through a small book named *Blood and Tears*, been able to get an insight into things that are even more dreadful than we have got used to during the world war. Earlier atrocities in Armenia are fading in comparison

with the actual extermination of Armenians, which recently took place.⁷

Hjalmar Branting, chairman of the Social-Democratic Party (and Minister for Foreign Affairs 1921–23), spoke in favour of a Swedish protest against the massacres in Armenia.⁸ Four days later, a public meeting in favour of the Armenian cause was arranged in the Auditorium in Stockholm, chaired by Carl Lindhagen. Among the speakers were Hjalmar Branting and Marika Stiernstedt. The number of persons present was estimated to a total of 1,800. In his speech, Hjalmar Branting stated:

The documents make clear that this is not about assaults done by minor officials, but about an organized and systematic genocide [*folk-mord*], worse than has ever been seen in Europe. It is a matter of the entire population of huge regions being massacred, forcing the survivors into the desert, hoping they would not endure but their bones would wither in the sand.

This genocide is unique among all the atrocities of the war when it comes to the number of victims and the systematic savagery with which it has been carried out. When we read about it, our hearts have turned ice-cold; truly in all seriousness, it puts our hearts on ice.⁹

So, it is fair to say that a missionary, Olga Moberg, who lived among Armenian survivors, greatly contributed to raise the awareness of the situation of the Armenian people, making the genocide part of the political agenda. But it was not until 2010 that the Swedish parliament voted in favour of recognizing the genocide.¹⁰ Under the heading “Decisions in Brief”, the parliament’s web site states:

The Parliament [Riksdagen] approved a multi-party motion which among other things included a request that Sweden should recognize the genocide [folk mord] of Armenians, Assyrians/Syrians/Chaldeans and Pontiac Greeks. Thus, the Parliament requests the Government to recognize the genocide.¹¹

The Educator Natanael Beskow – a Man of Action

Natanael Beskow, dean of Birkagården folk high school, preacher, and a hymnal lyricist, was instrumental in setting up The Swedish Committee for Armenia in 1921. He wrote several books in Swedish, among them *A Martyred People in the Twentieth Century* (1921), *A Swedish Farming Colony for Armenian Refugees* (1927) and *The Armenian Colonisation in the Region of Euphrates* (1930).¹² The publishing house run by the folk high school also published books in 1921 by the Germans Johannes Lepsius and Martin Niepage. The pamphlets ended with a three-page petition “Save Armenia” signed by the board of the Swedish Committee for Armenia. The petition in turn ends with an appeal for financial support for the Armenian people. “Hereby, the Swedish Committee would like to send a warm appeal to the Swedish people to act so the abandoned Armenian people may know that here in the North they have friends who in human solidarity will stand by their side.”

Together with Hagbard Isberg, Natanael Beskow took part in a conference in Copenhagen 1920 organized by The Movement for a Christian International. One item on the agenda was to find a solution for about 100,000 Armenian orphans who were said to be “to a great degree abandoned to misery”.¹³ The conference put forward three alternatives: 1) transfer the children to neutral countries, 2) transfer them to colonies in the vicinity of Constantinople, and 3) or-

ganize colonies in their native country in, for example Cilicia or Syria, all under international control. The Copenhagen conference urged countries to form national committees. Beskow acted on behalf of Sweden, and The Swedish Committee for Armenia was established at a conference in Stockholm in February 1921.

The Swedish Committee for Armenia received regular messages from the Danish missionary Karen Jeppe, who was appointed Commissioner by the League of Nations and stationed in Aleppo. She estimated that the Armenian population had been “almost completely exterminated” in the Armenian provinces and that in the mid-1920s, approximately 100,000 refugees were in Syria, many of them living under miserable conditions.¹⁴ The Swedish Committee for Armenia aimed at making an active contribution to solve the refugee question by establishing agriculture colonies north of the Euphrates in Syria, and Karen Jeppe was instrumental in this work. Two villages, Tel Samen (Butter Hill) and Tel Armen (Armenian Hill) were established with approximately 300 persons on the River Bahlik, and later a third colony, Charb-Bedros, with 40 Armenian and 40 Arabic families. Natanael Beskow wrote:

We are the pioneers. We have broken the ice. Now, it is about sticking to it and pursuing our cause. The entire herd follows the head ram; no-one needs to worry about that. We are already overburdened with offers from landowners who want to have Armenians, and by Armenians who want to be out there. But I am still very reserved and careful. Above all not to take any step that would endanger the entire project.¹⁵

In 1930, 800 farmers were working in the colonies. Yet another step was taken when

half of the village of Tiene was rented and 60 more Armenian families arrived, an Armenian school was established and doctors were appointed.

Natanael Beskow was so convinced by colonization as a road forward for the Armenians that the Association, through the Movement for a Christian International, sent a direct request to the League of Nations. Written by Natanael Beskow, the request proposed that the League of Nations should draw a plan for “peaceful colonization” by settling European and American colonists in order to safeguard Armenian settlements in their “former places of residence”.¹⁶ The letter was, however, never discussed or acknowledged by neither the General Assembly, nor any of the Commissions.

The Extermination of a Nation

In Sweden, funds were regularly collected on behalf of the Armenian colonies and the survivors. The names of contributors and the amounts collected were on regular basis published in *Kristet samhällsliv* [Christian Social Life], a publication with the Association for Christian Social Life. The list of contributors published in November 1926 included three interesting names: O. Moberg, who contributed 50 kronor from a collection in Klinten, and A. Johansson,

who had collected 12.50 kronor. One cannot be certain but there is a possibility that these are the two missionaries who had worked so actively with Armenians: Olga Moberg from the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden and Alma Johansson from Women Missionary Workers. A third person known to us is Natanael Beskow, who reportedly collected 294 kronor and 77 öre in Örebro.¹⁷ An anonymous person had given 1,000 Swedish kronor, and money came from all over Sweden (Gothenburg, Uppsala, Karlskrona, Kalmar, Fellingsbro, Västergötland, Norrköping, Nora, just to mention a few) as well as from England and the United States.

Obviously, a lot of people in Sweden knew about what happened to the Armenians thanks to stories published in books and articles. Here, just a few of the reporting persons have been mentioned. I could also have told the story of the Swedish ambassador to Constantinople, Cosswa Anckarsvärd, or the Swedish military attaché af Wirsén, both of whom however are being presented elsewhere in this book. These persons were close to what happened, listened to survivors and read the reports, and they were all convinced that this was an extermination of an entire nation.

Endnotes

- 1 “Fruktansvärda massakrer i Armenien” in *Svenska Morgonbladet*, May 26, 1915.
- 2 These persons have also been accounted for in my book *Genocide of Armenians Through Swedish Eyes* (2013) Yerevan: The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute and in an article published in Swedish “Det armeniska folk mordet och Svenska vittnen” (2009) in *Innanför och utanför. Arv, identitet och nyorientering hos armenier och kopter i Sverige*. Tro & Liv Skriftserie nr 6.
- 3 Moberg, Olga in Piranjan, M., *Blod och Tårar. Armeniernas lidanden i Turkiet*. Stockholm: Svenska Missionsförbundets Förlag, 1917, p. 9 cont.
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 3 cont.

- 5 See for example in *Social-Demokraten*, March 20, 1917.
- 6 The City Archive of Stockholm, Carl Lindhagen's Archive, The Collection of letters, volume 43.
- 7 Riksdagen's protocol. 1917. Second Chamber. Nr 35. March 23, 1917 – my translation.
- 8 Riksdagen's protocol. 1917. Second Chamber. Nr 36. March 24, 1917 – my translation.
- 9 “Armeniernas fruktansvärda ställning. Ett opinionsmöte på tisdagen” in *Social-Demokraten*. March 28, 1917; see also “Protestmöte för armenierna” in *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 28, 1917 – my translation.
- 10 Minutes 2009/10:86.
- 11 See the Swedish version of the web site: <http://www.riksdagen.se/Webbnav/index.aspx?nid=7160&datum=3/11/2010> – my translation.
- 12 *Ett martyrfolk i det tjugonde århundradet*, Stockholm: Birkagårdens förlag, 1921; *En svensk jordbrukskoloni för armeniska flyktingar*. Stockholm: Birkagårdens förlag, 1927; *Den armeniska kolonisationen i Eufrat-trakten*. Stockholm: R.W. Statlanders boktryckeri, 1930.
- 13 Beskow, Natanael, *PM Konferensen för Armenien i Köpenhamn den 14–17 december 1920*, Riksarkivet F3B:1.
- 14 Jeppe, Karen, *Den armeniska kolonisationen i Eufrat-trakten*. Stockholm: R.W. Statlanders Boktryckeri, 1930, p. 3–5.
- 15 Natanael Beskow, “Internationella Försoningsförbundets Armenienkoloni” in *Kristet samhällsliv*. No. 7–9 1924, p. 10–11 – my translation.
- 16 “Skrivelse i armeniska frågan till Nationernas förbund” in *Kristet samhällsliv*. No. 8–9 1922, p. 2–3.
- 17 Gerda von Friesen, “Den svenska kommittén för Internationella Försoningsförbundets Armenienkoloni har från 1 april – 1 oktober 1926 mottagit följande bidrag:” in *Kristet samhällsliv*. No. 10 1926, p. 84.

Knowing and Doing

The Armenian Genocide in Official Swedish Reports

Vahagn Avedian

Objectivity as Creditable Factor

Objectivity, or rather the lack of it, is one of the main arguments in the Armenian Genocide denial. Our knowledge of the Armenian Genocide is nowadays based on rich witness accounts and archive sources from the Major Powers involved in the First World War – WWI – namely Great Britain, France, USA but also Germany, Austria and Turkey. Notwithstanding, in substantiation of the Armenian Genocide denial, it is often argued that the underlying information found in Entente archives and media were unreliable since they were rather war propaganda, exaggerated and even untrue. The numerous witness accounts and reports by missionary workers, e.g. the Swedish Alma Johansson, have been dismissed due to their religious compassion for the Christian victims. It is in the light of similar accusations, although mostly unfounded and misleading, the diplomatic and military reports of neutral Sweden emerge as highly interesting and important source to the events of WWI. This provided Sweden with a wide network of intelligence gathering, diplomatic as well as military, not only from the Ottoman Turkey and its allied Germany, but also from other neutral states, the Entente powers as well as the representatives of the affected minorities in the Empire.

Up to 1920 and its entry into the League of Nations, Sweden adhered to a strict rule

of neutrality in regard to its foreign policy. Nonetheless, Sweden was considered Germanophile while conducting strict neutrality towards other warring states.¹ The Swedish anxiousness for neutrality can be observed in an appeal by the Foreign Ministry to the Publishers' Club during early stages of the war. The Swedish Press was encouraged to report "fully objective and without taking sides for or against any of the warring parties as well as avoiding any perceived offensive judgment."² The trade and industry actors were also active in this regard, urging major newspapers to display restraint in their foreign reporting. "If the Swedish press would act inappropriate, Swedish economic relations with the insulted state could be harmed for years to come, thereby damaging the country's economy at large."³ The realpolitik interests were already at work.

The Swedish Press was, however, not immune to external encroachment. Among others, a special bureau was created to provide the Swedish countryside papers with articles from the German press. "About 50 papers were among the receivers, mostly conservative organs, but also a number of liberal papers."⁴ In order to further influence Swedish opinion, Germany secretly purchased the majority of the shares in the newspapers *Aftonbladet* and *Dagen*. Having a total of 92,000 in circulation, this meant

that the newspapers equalled the circulation of the Entente-friendly *Dagens Nyheter* and *Social-Demokraten*.⁵ In spite of the fact that such a large number of newspapers were under German influence, which could have affected the reporting of events in Turkey, the reports about the ongoing massacres and deportations were many in Swedish press. In the light of this information, the diplomatic dispatches from the Swedish Embassy in Constantinople gain even more credibility and value. Almost overwhelmingly marked as “Confidential” or “Strictly Confidential,” the reports were meant for the Foreign Ministry only. This implied that the author enjoyed the liberty of informing Stockholm about the non-censured or sugar-coated version of the events in the Ottoman Empire.

Up to their entry into the war, the American presence in Turkey was probably the foremost source for reports about the Armenian fate. The reports by US diplomats, teachers and medical personnel throughout the Ottoman Empire account for an important part of our knowledge about the Armenian Genocide.⁶ However, once USA abandoned its neutrality in the spring of 1917, joining the Entente Powers against the Ottoman Empire, this source of information ceased. As a matter of fact, the Swedish Embassy in Constantinople was entrusted with the task of handling American interests in the Ottoman Empire in the absence of American envoys. To this end, the Swedish legation expanded its staff with an additional chargé d'affaires, Envoy G. Ahlgren.⁷

Military Reports

That the neutrality of Sweden matters in this context is evident in the often cited Swedish military testimony by Major Gustav Hjalmar Pravitz, even though it is used by the genocide deniers. He was actually stationed in Persia, not in the Ottoman Empire,

a member of the Swedish military mission invited to improve Persia's gendarmerie and police operations. Upon his return to Sweden he published an article (April 23, 1917) in *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*,⁸ denouncing the reports about an ongoing annihilation of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. His remarks were based on his observations during the journey by car (with a Turkish chauffeur assigned by the Turkish government) from Constantinople to the Persian border. Pravitz admitted that he had seen dead bodies and dying people begging for a piece of bread, but, with the exception of one case, he did not see the alleged violence used against the Armenian “emigrants.”⁹ He also mentions meeting an Armenian in a concentration camp (*koncentrationsläger*), itself an interesting choice of word in the context of this study.¹⁰ However, in order to be able to put Pravitz's observations and interpretation into perspective, it is necessary to also reflect upon his personal view in regard to the Armenian people as such. In his book,¹¹ Pravitz renders his views regarding Persia, the Persians and the minorities living in the country. His description of the Armenian element was hardly flattering and Jews and Armenians were described as “lying merchants” and Armenians as “highly untrustworthy.”¹² In general, the “bloody” measures of the Turkish Government towards the “disloyal” Armenians were quite justified, even though innocent people had suffered, too.¹³

Unlike Pravitz, there was another Swedish military witness on site, namely Captain (later Major) Einar af Wirsén, the Military Attaché at the Swedish Embassy. He arrived to Constantinople in late 1915 and stayed in Turkey until 1920. As an officer of neutral Sweden he was able to travel around in Turkey, visit different fronts and be informed about both Turkish and Ger-

man military intelligence and data. In one of his earliest reports, af Wirsén described the situation in Turkey and the spreading of epidemics, mainly typhus, and remarked that the “Armenian persecutions have highly contributed to the spreading of the disease since those deported have died in hundreds of thousands due to hunger and other hardships along the roads.”¹⁴ Even though he mentioned the treatment of the Armenian population in several of his reports to the General Staff in Stockholm, it is in his memoirs we find the most illuminative depiction of the Armenian Genocide. In this book, *Memories from Peace and War* (1942) af Wirsén dedicated an entire chapter to the Armenian Genocide, entitled *The Murder of a Nation*.¹⁵ He wrote: “During the first year of my stay in Turkey an incredible tragedy occurred which belongs to one of the most horrible events which has taken place during the world history. I refer to the destruction of the Armenians.”¹⁶ The subsequent deportations were nothing but a cover for the extermination: “Officially, these had the goal to move the entire Armenian population to the steppe regions of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria, but in reality they aimed to exterminate [utrota] the Armenians, whereby the pure Turkish element in Asia Minor would achieve a dominating position.”¹⁷ af Wirsén points out that the orders were given with utter cunning. The communications were generally given verbally and in extreme secrecy in order to give the government a free hand in the implementation of the massacres.¹⁸ af Wirsén continued “Those who were not murdered, perished due to intentionally evoked hardships under the most revolting circumstances.” af Wirsén’s observation is especially important in regard to the Turkish denial of intent, a central issue in regard to the applicability of the definition of the UN Genocide Con-

vention, arguing that the deportations were rather “relocations” and for the sake of the Armenian population’s safety. However, as Taner Akçam points out, the issue of intent to kill becomes evident once we consider the implemented deportations were done in spite of the total lack of necessary preparations and resources for such an operation.¹⁹ The deportations were simply equal to death.

af Wirsén estimated that around one million Armenians were murdered or perished due to “authority measures.” Keeping this number in mind, one could conclude that at least half the Ottoman Armenians lost their lives, while if the Turkish claims about the pre-WWI Armenian population being less than two million are true, then the losses were even greater proportionally. af Wirsén concludes his chapter with the following words:

The annihilation of the Armenian nation in Asia Minor must revolt all human feelings. It belongs without a doubt to the greatest crimes committed during the recent centuries. The manner by which the Armenian problem was solved was hair-raising. I can still see in front of me Talaat’s cynical expression, when he emphasized that the Armenian Question was solved. And I concur with the words of the German Military Plenipotentiary in Constantinople, General von Lossow, who, even though to some degree defended the Turkish measures, uttered to me in private: “The Armenian massacres are the greatest bestiality in world history.”²⁰

An Ongoing Annihilation:

The Diplomatic Reports 1914–1920

The Swedish Ambassador in Constantinople at this time was the career diplomat Per Gustaf August Cosswa Anckarsvärd, who had been in office since 1908 and would remain there until 1920, when he was trans-

ferred to Warsaw as the new ambassador to Poland.²¹ His numerous reports during this period unambiguously confirmed the genocidal nature of the massacres and deportations sanctioned by the Ottoman government.

Anckarsvärd's reporting about the ominous development in the Ottoman Empire started already in December 1914, when he dispatched a note stating that "the Turkish Parliament has as today been reduced to simply and alone approve the decisions of the ruling party."²² This was an ill-boding premonition of what was about to happen, since the *Union and Progress Party* (Turkish *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), better known in West as *Young Turks*, was in total control over the Empire. The power had in the 1913 coup d'état been concentrated in the hands of a very small clique within the party, led by the triumvirate consisting of Interior Minister Talaat Pasha, the War Minister Enver Pasha, and the Marine Minister and Governor of Aleppo Cemal Pasha. The process, as described in the Swedish reports, reminds strongly of how the Nazis consolidated their power during the 1930s. This was evident in a lengthy report that envoy G. Ahlgren sent on September 10, 1917. In this detailed report, Ahlgren analysed the policy of the *İttihatists* and the means for the consolidation of the power. Initially, they had attempted the policy of "Ottomanization" of the Empire's population in order to homogenize what was left of the Ottoman Empire when the Christian nations on the Balkan had emancipated themselves from Turkish rule and gained their independence. The reform was welcomed by all inhabitants, but the *İttihatists* soon discovered the potentially dangerous aspects of the reform since the minorities started demanding same rights as the Turks, among others

Security for life and property, access to civilian and military offices, yes, even to the government. Such equality would undeniably entail the destruction of the Turkish element's supremacy, which supported itself on neither superior quantity nor intelligence, but has rather came about as the right of the victor.²³

The rulers soon realized that the only solution for maintaining the Turkish hegemony was to attain not only qualitative supremacy, but also a quantitative:

They attempted to make the Turks qualitatively superior by implementing the provisions of the new constitution regarding the civil rights only for themselves and by favouring their intellectual education through all means, while the other nationalities were held at bay as much as possible. They tried to make them quantitatively superior by assimilating other nationalities and, once it failed, soon enough through political persecutions and extermination. It is against this background that one might view the measures against the Armenians and potentially similar actions against the Greeks.²⁴

The similarities with Nazi Germany are striking in regard to the Young Turk's seizure of power by establishing a reign of terror in which there was no room for neither opposition, nor questioning government actions. Since the coup d'état in 1913, the *İttihatists* were ruling the empire with a rod of iron: the political opposition was suffocated and numerous "inconvenient" individuals were apprehended, jailed and "disappeared in one way or another." The result was the transfer of Sultan Abdul Hamid II's unrestricted power to the *İttihatists*. Talaat Pasha supervised the entire composition of the parliament and the appointment of key administrative positions by "loyal followers." The police corps and the army were reorga-

nized, becoming secure tools in the hands of the government. Ahlgren concluded:

An unrestricted power rests now in the hands of a few persons, who are ruthlessly abusing it for implementing their plans and for their own gain, their friends' and their protégés'. The ruthlessness is exercised primarily against the non-Turkish elements of the population.²⁵

The stage was set to get rid of the inconvenient Armenian Question, emerged at the San Stefano Conference in 1878.²⁶

There was, however, one major obstacle left, namely the danger of foreign military intervention, i.e. similar to those which had earlier resulted in the independence of Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. The golden opportunity would present itself in the shape of World War I.

One of earliest reports by Anckarsvärd on the subject dates to April 30, 1915, in which he talks about the so-called *Hamidian Massacres* during 1894–96²⁷ and the 1909 Adana massacre, but also the arrest of numerous Armenian journalists, doctors and lawyers who had been sent to Angora awaiting trial.²⁸ What he described was the initial phase of the genocide when around 250 Armenian leaders and intellectuals were arrested on the night towards April 24 (thus, the annual commemoration day), sent to the interior of the Empire where the majority of them were executed within 72 hours.

About one month later Anckarsvärd reported about the delivered joint ultimatum by Britain, France and Russia (May 24, 1915) to the Turkish Government, stating that:

In regard to this new crime against humanity and civilisation, the allied governments declare openly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold each member of the Turkish government per-

sonally responsible, as well as those who have participated in these massacres.²⁹

This very first usage of the term “crimes against humanity” in history and its related prosecution within international law would come to be enforced in the 1920 Sèvres Treaty.³⁰

On July 6, 1915, Anckarsvärd sent the first of his six reports that year entitled “The Persecutions of the Armenians.” He wrote:

The persecutions of the Armenians have reached hair-raising proportions and everything points to the fact that the Young Turks want to seize the opportunity, since due to different reasons there is no effective external pressure to be feared, to once and for all put an end to the Armenian Question. The means for this are quite simple and consist of the extermination [utrotandet] of the Armenian nation. /.../ It does not seem to be the Turkish population which acts on its own accord, but the entire movement originates from the government institutions and the Young Turks' Committee which stands behind them and now displays what kind of ideas they harbour. /.../ The German Ambassador has in writing appealed to the Porte, but what can Germany or any other of the Major Powers do as long as the war continues? That the Central Powers would threaten Turkey is for the time being unthinkable, and Turkey is already at war with the majority of the remaining Major Powers.³¹

This report alone confirmed three central issues in the Armenian Genocide. First and foremost, the massacres were planned and sanctioned by the central authorities and not a question about a civil war between Muslims and Christians. Secondly, in regard to the essential issue of intent, the ultimate aim was the “extermination of the Armen-

ian nation”. And finally, the factor of the ongoing war, presenting the splendid opportunity to get rid of “the Armenian Question” without fearing external intervention.

Allied Germany was, however, not entirely indifferent, even though their protests seemed rather a precaution against potential accusations about German complicity. On July 14, Anckarsvärd notified about the German official note to the Ottoman Government in which the German Ambassador protested against the “persecutions of the Armenians.” Even though the actions might be justified from military point of view, the extent and the unnecessary excessive violence would put Turkey in an unfavourable light and open up the opportunity for European intervention in Turkey’s internal affairs as soon as the war ended.³² Germany, however, did hardly anything to stop the massacres other than issuing protest notes.

A new report one day later, on July 15, cited the Armenian Patriarch’s appeal to the Turkish government that

[I]f the aim is to annihilate the Armenian nation, in which case he would be ready to initiate a movement to organize a mass exodus to e.g. South America. In this way the Turks would get rid of the Armenians and they would suffer less than now.³³

One week later Anckarsvärd dispatched a new report fearing that the annihilation policy towards the Armenians would also be implemented towards the Greek population of the Empire.³⁴

The massacres had reached their peak during the summer of 1915, forcing the German Embassy to yet again openly protest the treatment of the Armenians. The tone was sharper this time. The German Ambassador made it clear that

Germany can no longer remain a silent witness to how Turkey, through the Armenian persecutions, was going downhill, morally and economically. Furthermore, they protested against the Porte’s course of actions, based on which her ally Germany becomes suspected of approving these and, finally, Germany renounces any responsibility for the consequences.³⁵

Some weeks later Anckarsvärd noted that the German protests have had little effect and they have only served the purpose of “decreasing the accusations towards Germany’s part in the responsibility.” He continued:

It is considered here that more than half a million Armenians have disappeared, killed or died as a result of diseases and hunger after the deportations. /.../ It is evident that the Turks are taking the opportunity to, now during the war, annihilate [utplåna] the Armenian nation so that when peace comes the Armenian Question no longer exists. /.../ It is noteworthy that the persecutions of Armenians have been done at the instigation of the Turkish Government and are primarily not a spontaneous eruption of Turkish fanaticism, even though this fanaticism is used and plays a role. The tendency to make Turkey inhabited only by Turks could in due time come to appear in a horrifying manner also towards the Greeks and other Christians.³⁶

Thus, Anckarsvärd repeated his earlier conviction that the measures were centrally planned and implemented with the intent to annihilate. This was a genocidal campaign.

In his last report during 1915 entitled “The Armenian Persecutions” Anckarsvärd confirmed the estimation of the Armenian Patriarch about the disappearance of half of the Armenian population, even though he questioned the Patriarch’s mentioned two million.³⁷

During the spring of 1916, Anckarsvärd reported about the potential Arab revolt within the Empire and the fear of the implementation of the measures against the Armenians:

Only thanks to the war could such an ultra-terroristic dominion such as the present one be able to sustain. This dominion's true nature has surfaced in such a pregnant manner in and through the Armenian persecutions. That the same violent methods are still being used is evident by the latest intelligence reports about the measures to suppress the threatening fermentation among the Arabs.³⁸

Only foreign intervention could have prevented the ongoing annihilation and the war had given the most excellent opportunity to implement the governmental plan, inconceivable during peace time.

In January 1917, reporting on the general situation in Turkey, Anckarsvärd made the following remark in regard to prevailing distress and shortage of provisions: "Worse than this is, however, the extermination of the Armenians, which could have been prevented if German advisers had in time been granted power over the civilian administration as the German officers in fact enjoy over army and navy."³⁹ Half a year later, envoy Ahlgren sent a detailed report about a war-torn Turkey. His thorough rendering of the strained economic situation and the prevailing high prices are explained by the following:

"[o]bstacles for domestic trade, the almost total paralysing of the foreign trade and finally the strong decreasing of labour power, caused partly by the mobilisation but partly also by the extermination of the Armenian race [utrotandet af den armeniska rasen]."⁴⁰

Thus, until 1920, the reports by the Swedish diplomatic and military presence spoke clearly and unanimously about the fate of the Armenian nation: it was an extermination campaign, a genocide. The Turkish Government had taken the opportunity given by the cover of the war to once and for all solve the Armenian Question through physical extermination. Once the war was over, the international community should intervene and punish the perpetrators and for a short while it seemed that justice would prevail as stated in the Sèvres Treaty: punishment of war crimes and the creation of an independent and united Armenia.

Realpolitik Interests and Denial

However, the tone of the Swedish diplomatic reports changed diametrically in 1920 once the new envoy Gustaf Oskar Wallenberg arrived in Constantinople. He was the former Swedish envoy to Japan, half-brother to the former Foreign Minister K.A. Wallenberg. Gustaf Wallenberg differed from the traditional diplomatic corps: he was not a career diplomat, but a businessman, a trademark of his entire family background, one of the wealthiest in Sweden. Despite his wealthy background, he was not an aristocrat which was otherwise the normal for Swedish diplomats.⁴¹ Beginning his diplomatic career in Tokyo during 1906 (later being accredited to Beijing as well), he was a strenuous advocate of Swedish trade interests, within existing markets but especially in emerging ones.⁴² This would become abundantly evident in his reporting from Turkey.

Wallenberg's arrival to Constantinople coincided with the peace negotiations between Turkey and the Entente and the concluding of the Sèvres Treaty which also envisioned a united independent Armenia. To this end, the League of Nations wanted a mandate power for ensuring the security of

Armenia, entailing the deployment of peace-keeping forces. However, both France and Great Britain declined such a responsibility with reference to their already accepted mandates in the Middle East and North Africa. The League then turned to the three neutral states of Netherlands, Sweden and Norway, hoping that one of them would accept the responsibility for the operative part, while USA would finance the operation.⁴³ But, by this time the Kemalist (after the future founder and president Mustafa Kemal “Atatürk”) Nationalistic Movement had gained momentum in Turkey and the Entente powers would soon engage frenetically in securing their own interests in the new emerging Turkish Republic, abandoning all previous calls for punishment of war crimes as well as support for Armenia.

Sweden was no exception in this regard. Wallenberg’s very first dispatch from Turkey was his recommendation that Sweden should not accept the mandate of Armenia. He stated most clearly that Armenia had nothing to offer Sweden and went on quite far in smearing Armenians and their cause. Not only was the “Armenian national character highly unreliable, which, by the way is no surprise regarding a people whose politics has since centuries been limited to the fields of intrigue,” but the Armenians would always blame the mandate power for any possible scandal in the future. More important, if Sweden should ever accept such a role, Armenia was the least interesting subject in the entire region compared to Anatolia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. “Since we Swedes would scarcely be regarded to have any specific moral responsibility towards any of the Black Sea nations, there is hardly any reason for us to specialize on those who are least interesting from our own perspective.”⁴⁴ Not only did Armenia offer nothing to Swedish interests, but siding with Armenia would

also risk damaging Sweden’s prospects of establishing contacts with Armenia’s neighbours. It was pure business and *realpolitik*.

This complete turnaround would prevail during the entire period until the disappearance of the Armenian Question from the international agenda once the Lausanne Treaty was signed in 1923.⁴⁵ Wallenberg continued his negative and partly derogatory tone towards Armenia with the obvious ambition of defusing any attempt of support for Armenia. Instead, he was highly praiseful of Mustafa Kemal and his movement. Indeed, for a brief period of time before Anckarsvärd moved to Poland, there were totally contradictory accounts about Armenians and other minorities in Turkey: while Anckarsvärd reported of renewed massacres, now by the hand of the Nationalists, Wallenberg refuted any such occurrences, dismissing them as propaganda, instead praising Mustafa Kemal as the saviour of Turkey and its minorities.⁴⁶

Wallenberg continued this negative attitude in his coming reports as well. On March 17, 1921, he compared the Armenian nationalists in the “diaspora” with the Zionists as a “rather rootless phenomenon, at least mainly subsidized by individuals who themselves would not for a moment reflect upon settling in the dreamed ‘fatherland.’”⁴⁷ Furthermore, according to Wallenberg, Armenians as a nation had barely any future. Those inside Turkey were rather Christian Turks who spoke Turkish as their mother tongue, while those in the Soviet Union would be Russified. The only Armenians aspiring for an independent Armenia were those among the Western Diaspora.⁴⁸ The Armenians in Turkey, in spite of the “unfairly treatment,” would prefer a Turkish government before the colonial rule of foreign powers. “We are Turks, and would like to remain so,” he quoted approvingly a prominent Armenian lawyer he had encoun-

tered in Constantinople. However, the most conspicuous remark in his report was the following:

The blame for the unfortunate events of 1915 – the evacuation of the ‘suspect elements’ behind the Caucasus front and the subsequent long death marches to Mesopotamia and Syria – seems generally amongst the local Armenians to be put less on their Mussulmen countrymen (except of course the scapegoats Enver and Tal’at, who are otherwise not specially great repute with Angora) than on the Entente and those under the agitation of the diaspora Armenians, who intimidated the Turkish authorities and infuriated them.⁴⁹

This was not only contrary to the situation depicted by Anckarsvärd, Ahlgren and af Wirsén, but it also alluded to the very arguments used by the Turkish Republic to deny the genocide. The Armenians, according to Wallenberg, regarded Mustafa Kemal as their “time’s greatest man.”⁵⁰ The denial of the Armenian Genocide had begun in earnest.

In his report on April 21, 1921, Wallenberg claimed that the Christian minorities have manifestly started to

[a] large extent realize that there is indeed little motivation for calling themselves Armenians or Greek, just because they were Christians of Armenian or Greek rites, when they otherwise have the same language and same fatherland as their Mussulmen countrymen. Ever since the ‘Armenians’ in Anatolia have already during the past year freed themselves from the Armenian Patriarch’s influence, who is under foreign political influence, the ‘Greeks’ here have also started to show tendencies to separate themselves from the Ecumenical Patriarch.⁵¹

This indeed implied the forced Turkification of all non-Turkish minorities, as a consequence of the Nationalistic slogan “Turkey for Turks.” It is noteworthy how Wallenberg puts “Armenians” and “Greeks” within quotation marks as if they are nothing but artificial denominations, constructed by external actors for agitation through the respective church.

Wallenberg’s negative reporting continued well into 1922, until the Sovietization of Armenia and the subsequent treaties between Kemalist Ankara and Bolshevik Moscow put an end to the Armenian Question; for the time being.⁵² While Anckarsvärd hardly made any direct recommendation for Swedish involvement or reaction regarding the treatment of the Armenians (although alluding to such needs in the future, once the war was over), Wallenberg was more than clear on deterring Stockholm from any such commitment. Armenia was simply not worth it. Once the trade and economic aspects were weighed in, the issue of human rights and committed “crimes against humanity” faded in comparison, especially since Turkey and other neighbouring countries offered so much more potential profit for Sweden.

It should be added that Wallenberg and Sweden were far from alone. The Swedish reaction was in fact well aligned with the international community at large and the Major Powers in particular. Among others, the US High Commissioner in Turkey, Admiral Mark L. Bristol, argued that “The Armenians are a race like the Jews – they have little or no national spirit and poor moral character.” Bristol called Turkey “a virgin field for American business and American financial exploitation.”⁵³ In contrast, Bristol referred to Armenia as a “lemon” – a land with no natural resources or even seaports. According to Bristol, the Armenians and the

Greeks “have many flaws and deficiencies of character that do not fit them for self-government.”⁵⁴ The sooner U.S. dropped its support for Armenia in order to improve its relations with Turkey in order to get access to the Ottoman oilfields, the better.

Few statements have described the abandonment of the Armenians and the perplexity of the international community in a clearer way than the remarks by the Swedish Social-Demokraten correspondent in Geneva, reporting from the session of the League of Nations in regard to the support for Armenia:

The civilized nations looked at each other, a bit ashamed indeed and each and every one whispered their answer to the Council: ‘Surely Armenia must be aided. It is a responsibility towards all humanity to aid Armenia. It must not happen that Armenia is not aided. But why should I do it? Why should I? Why should I?’ was sounded from every direction. ‘Why should exactly I expose myself to the risk and the inconvenience of putting my nose in this robber’s den?’ And so, all the civilized na-

tions stood on the shore around the drowning people, each and every one with its lifeline in hand. But no-one wanted or dared to throw it, fearing they would themselves be drawn into the water.⁵⁵

The Armenian fate was sealed in the Lausanne Treaty which replaced the Sèvres treaty. The Turkish delegation leader, Ismet İnönü, made it abundantly clear that any attempt to discuss the Armenian Question would lead to the termination of the negotiations. US Ambassador Grew noted that “there is no subject upon which the Turks are more fixed in obstinacy than the Armenian Question.”⁵⁶ The Entente powers gave in to this threat and the Turkish victory at Lausanne was total. Winston Churchill wrote: “In the Lausanne Treaty, which established a new peace between the allies and Turkey, history will search in vain for the name Armenia.”⁵⁷

The Armenian Genocide has justly been called “a successful genocide.”

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Endnotes

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- 2 Gunilla Lundström, Per Rydén, Elisabeth Sandlund, *Den svenska pressens historia, Det moderna Sveriges spegel (1897-1945)*, Vol. 3 (Stockholm: Ekerlid, 2001), p. 124.
- 3 Lundström, Rydén, Sandlund, 2001, p. 125.
- 4 Lundström, Rydén, Sandlund, 2001, p. 124.
- 5 Tommy Hansson, *Neutralitetsmyten: En granskning av svensk utrikespolitik* (Stockholm: Contra, 1991), p. 20.

- 6 Among numerous photos and testimonies by Americans, perhaps the most famous belongs to the American Ambassador in Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's story*, New York, 1918.
- 7 Colonel G. Ahlgren's accreditation in this matter is mentioned in a communique between the American and the Swedish legations. See Riksarkivet, *Utrikesdepartementet, 1902 års dossiersystem, vol. 370*, Konstantinopel, 8 september 1917.
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- 11 Gustaf Hjalmar Pravitz, *Från Persien i stiltje och storm* (Stockholm: Dahlberg, 1918).
- 12 Pravitz, 1918, p. 22, 226–227.
- 13 Pravitz, 1918, p. 219, 221–223.
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- 16 af Wirsén, 1942, p. 220.
- 17 af Wirsén, 1942, p. 223.
- 18 af Wirsén, 1942, p. 226. For this aspect of secrecy see also Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence: Berghahn, 2004), p. 289, 384–385.
- 19 Dadrian, p. 243.
- 20 af Wirsén, 1942, p. 226.
- 21 The information is found among the legation's documents about personal files. Riksarkivet (RA), *Utrikesdepartementet, 1902 års dossiersystem, vol. 370*, 1890–1920, RA, Stockholm.
- 22 Riksarkivet (RA), Utrikesdepartementet (UD), *1902 års dossiersystem, vol. 1148*, nr. 241, 15 december 1914: Turkiska parlamentets öppnande, Anckarsvärd till utrikesminister K. Wallenberg.
- 23 RA, UD, *1902 års dossiersystem, vol. 1149b*, Nr. 260, Inrikespolitik i Turkiet. De maktägande, Ahlgren till utrikesminister A. Lindman, 10 september 1917.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 The first occasion where the “Armenian Question” was raised internationally as part of the “Eastern Question,” encompassing the diplomatic and political problems posed by the decaying Ottoman Empire, earning it the title of the “Sick man of Europe.” For the San Stefano Treaty see Michael Hurst, *Key Treaties of the Great Powers, 1814–1914*, Vol. 2, Oxford, 1972, p. 528–548.
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- 28 RA, *UD, 1902 års dossiersystem, vol. 1148, Nr. 99*, Den armeniska upprorsrörelsen och dess senaste yttringar, Anckarsvärd till K. Wallenberg, 30 april 1915.
- 29 *The Porte or Sublime Porte* is a metonym for the Government of the Ottoman Empire, by reference to the gate of the building from which orders and decrees were announced. RA, *UD, 1902 års dossiersystem, vol. 1148, Nr. 117*, Händelserna i Armenien, Anckarsvärd till utrikesminister K. Wallenberg, 7 juni 1915. For the excerpt of the ultimatum see Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 1918 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967), p. 52.
- 30 For the provisions of the treaty see World War I Document Archive, *Peace Treaty of Sèvres*, Brigham Young University Library, Utah; wwi.lib.byu.edu.
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- 33 RA, *UD, 1902 års dossiersystem, vol. 1148, Nr. 145*, Förföljelserna mot armenierna, Anckarsvärd till utrikesminister K. Wallenberg, 15 juli 1915.
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Under the Lid: Women, Silenced Memories and the Armenian Genocide

Introduction to the film Grandma's Tattoos

Suzanne Khardalian

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I have a tree, my own tree in Stockholm. A dead oak tree. Majestic from a distance. Yet it holds as its secret the big hole inside its trunk. You will not see it unless you climb down and examine it closely. This magnificent oak has still kept its form. The beautiful woody branches still rise to the sky. But the tree is dead; it has been dead for more than a decade. It is a monument to things gone. And it is mute; you will not hear its leaves murmur. I am surprised no one has decided to cut it down.

The tree has lost its roots, just like me. It is standing with no roots. Living, yet dead. Just like my culture, my mother tongue.

I am full of dying or dead words. A lifeless existence. On my way to being extinct.

Why am I writing about my tree? The oak evokes in me a world that is disappearing. But what fascinates me is this unique state of being half dead, half alive. What does a dead tree have to offer? Not life! Herein are the origins of my interest in memory and its reflections in my work.

Why do we remember things? What is memory? What is it that we choose to remember, and what do we decide to forget? Do we even decide? How much can we influence the process of memory-making?

And why do we remember genocide? Why do we want to remember the pain? Why do we want to pass it on? Is there anything at all to learn from genocide?

And what about selective amnesia? Why do we decide to remember certain stories about the Armenian Genocide, but have difficulty even mentioning some others? I've been grappling with these questions for more than two decades now. They are at the core of my films.

Silence and Memory: Armenian Women and the Trauma of Genocide

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Those words, long familiar to Christians, introduce the Gospel of John. The Word of God is the Saviour, the promise of life. The Gospel of John is a celebration of this saviour as The Life Giving Word.

Yet this film and the process of remembering begins, however, not with word, but with silence. So, in the beginning is silence. This silence is not empty, but pregnant with meaning; it is filled with yearning. This silence screams words of pain, of ignorance, of evil unacknowledged, and of desire unfulfilled. These words have been denied or rejected; they have been rendered mute. The silencing is of those who have been victimized in history. Their silence contains thousands of words, a host of memories, that we have yet to hear and receive. We are called to enter this silence as witnesses. We are asked to listen attentively to the words of those who have not yet been fully heard.

And so this film is about the silence and the listening and the invitation to speak. It is about a memory lost, a taboo, memories that are deliberately erased or mutated, memories that are not supposed to be remembered.

It begins by attending to those who have not always named their word, whose word has not been heard or has been suppressed and ignored. Those words issue forth as memories, submerged and unclaimed, which now come to the surface and call for rescue. As we hear and remember anew, salvation will take on a new form.

Dealing With Silence and Acts of Memory

However, why do we want to remember? Often because we have a lesson to learn. Why do you tell stories? Because by telling the story we transmit the lesson learned to coming generations.

Now the lessons we decide to storage is very selective. Often the memory is about something we have lost. It is about acknowledging a defeat, a loss.

What happens to storytelling when the subject is genocide.

Is there a lesson in genocide? What does the experience of genocide offer to humanity?

What happens when the storyteller is offering you short sentences, sharp and stiff?

What happens when the words used have new, unknown meanings to you?

What happens when the silence in the stories you are told is as striking as the words used?

What happens when people are telling not with words, but against words, when instead of transmitting the story they transmit their helplessness? What happens when the scene stage is impossible to construct? What happens when all you have are fragments of stories with breaks of total silence? This no-

tion of memory as a direct link to an essential truth escapes us.

Landscape As Site of Memory

Landscape has always been important for my work, again as an important element of storytelling. Why did I bring up the issue of landscape? Because landscapes are important sites of memory. Memory as a projection onto the places and sites of the landscapes is a key component of storytelling. For mankind, geographical locales are overlaid with mythology and the human imagination, to become personified memory.

Memory fragments in the form of visual tableaux are animated through archival film, family photographs, and sound-scapes and recently filmed landscapes and objects. All this in order to express moments of epiphany – moments of recollection and revelation that have become embedded in the memory against the background of family or collective or nation fictions. As such, the Past that was buried in the imagination is refracted through the families memory, and the film becomes kind of an archaeological investigation. In the process of observing the past, issues of family dysfunction, the split between the observed self, the familial other self and the remembered self are brought into sharp focus. In illuminating the past as personal ethnography, the film plays with identity positions, questions of power relations and even re-arranges family hierarchies.

Grandma's Tattoos draws on personal ethnography to navigate the territory of memory through the media of authentication (photographs and home movies) and personal remembering. Personal remembering is part of a collective remembering.

My own childhood memory fragments mix the found and the fictional to form audio-visual scenes as sites of exploration. Taking the example of the family photos,

looking for an answer to my questions, the secret in the family is illustrative the way they appear in the film. For my father the photographs erased the past, monumentalized and stabilized the family for the future, “these were happy days”. Grandma was not in the photos. We were happy without her.

So what have I done? I came in and by producing, re-organizing and re-looking at the images of the past, I subject memory to interpretation and thus memory acquires multiple meanings. The past becomes a contested zone with each reviewing and family narration. Throughout the film there are multiple “single moments” which remain isolated. As separate moments they have no centre, they occupy empty space. They require a narrative to re-construct them. The film becomes the battleground for control of a family narrative. First my father’s photos of “happy moments”. Then comes my mother with a narrative, and aunt Lucia negates it, the 104-years-old survivor living in Yerevan, Maria Vardanyan, brings another aspect, the sisters claim silence.

The film and the issue of the silence ultimately point to loss rather than reminding us of presence. My attempt has been to set up questions of memory, to situate fragments and photographs as material for interpretation and evidence – to concur or disprove of personal recollections. For what is remembered of the self when the observed is there as masked performance?

In the film the images function as a trace, as a code or a clue to a meaning that is located elsewhere “like a riddle read and decoded”. The process involves a search for a self that has been erased. It is an attempt to reconstitute an absent self in defence of what is invisible, what has been hidden by the masked performance.

Grandma’s Tattoos: the Film Itself as a Memory Space

In *Grandma’s Tattoos*, the compositioning is used to resurrect personal recollections from the purely testimonial “That has been”, to produce a tableau of multiple subjectivities.

The multi-layering techniques evoke the messiness of memories – intense moments of recollection. In making the scenes, I put together formerly disconnected pieces of material from the family photos and the archives, the landscape, with graphic reconstructions, sound-scapes recorded at the location and recent interviews.

In the reconstructions, I place myself in the foreground and create another story in the background unsettling any unified family narrative.

By using technology of memory, we start out on a journey with a sense of loss in order to seek for traces of memory. At the heart of these photographs is ultimately absence, absence of the past, absence of a singular autobiography or unified family story.

In response to this absence, this film dismantles further the family’s fragmented narrative in order to reconstruct the memoirs into “moments of being” through the media of photographs, home movies and family recollections. These memory fragments restore the stage scene as a space of the past.

What is created in the place of a tidy testimonial are the rituals of memory and the construction of a personal mythology. In so doing, another memory space is established – one that is deliberately reflective and self-conscious about its process.

The interplay between imagination, memory and the autobiographical becomes a map for navigation. In this way, the viewer becomes engaged in a process of memory creation and a debate about ways that films function as a medium of memory and the film itself becomes a memory space.

Armenian Women Survivors and Transmission of Silence

The silence that enshrouds the memories of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, of the abused women, the persecuted men and the oppressed children is not accidental or chosen; it is a silencing by a world with a draft to exclude. These threatened memories and people are in reality themselves threats to socio-political narratives which reflect and produce particular arrangements of power, serving certain interests. "Truth" is politically produced through the shaping of meaning. The "word" which we know begins as an empty sign, flexible, malleable to the play of power in the world. Attending to the silence includes being attuned to silencing that results from oppression or denial. It requires a critical consciousness of such dynamics and forces, a sharpening of the ear to hear those sounds not found in the scales we have practiced. These sounds will lead to more complex understandings of word and world.

The silent and silenced ones stand, however, as challenge to Christianity's claim to effective redemptive power. Their suffering testifies to the unrealized promise. If the promise of Christianity's redemptive Word is to be kept for those who suffer, then that Word must include their words and their memories in a way that actively shapes redeeming truth. Indeed, we must begin with listening to and receiving these memories.

As an Armenian-Swede, as the child of an immigrant from Lebanon with roots extending to Turkey, as a writer and film director I have thought, filmed and written about identity construction in the context of the Armenian Genocide, however my latest film *Grandma's Tattoos* puts emphasis on gender.

While the Armenian Genocide and its denial have been central to my work and

identity, the discussion of the different aspects of the genocide has been limited. Vital questions have been either ignored or marginalized not only by me but also by Armenian communities. The psychological effects of the genocide have never been discussed publicly. We do not know how the continuing denial has compounded the effects of the original trauma. How did sexual violence, the rape and abduction of Armenian women and girls impact conceptions of and the practice of sexuality among subsequent Armenian generations? Is gender at all implicated in the constructions of Armenian concepts of the nation and Diaspora identities?

My neglect of these issues has been another kind of denial with serious consequences. Much later did I realize that the discussion about the effect of the treatment of women and girls of the genocide has been missing from both scholarly research and community. That is changing. We now know that the genocide was very gendered. Men were killed, and women and children were sent on forced marches. Women and girls were raped and abducted, some were forced into prostitution, both during the genocide and in its aftermath, as a way to survive. These aspects of the genocide were recognized by contemporary observers. The Armenian press from the period after the genocide, has consecrated long columns about the reintegration of the Armenian women and their children, who were fathered by Turkish men. It was the topic of a heated debate. That debate was central to reconstructing the nation and Armenian identity. Yet the stories of the women survivors have been silenced in the form of either complete erasure or banalization. Silence as erasure did occur in the moment of making history, even though early narratives about women and children were not silenced or erased.

Conclusion

Women survivors and their stories pose major challenges to historians and filmmakers as well, because we are dealing with masculinised memory, humiliation is presented as understood by men, and even hope is masculinised.

Researching the genocide, one can recover the stories of many women survivors and perceive the dichotomy between positive attitudes towards orphans on the one hand and, on the other hand, the uneasiness or unconcealed negativity towards women and girls who had become prostitutes, who had lived in Turkish households and whose children had been fathered by Turkish men.

But women, although silenced, come across as key actors in the process of transmission, even if transmission occurs through silence.

As a film maker I believe we need to know these stories as much as the stories of those lost or silenced women who survived the genocide. They are also victims and survivors who ought to be honoured, and researching them from a feminist perspective can provide vital insights into how post-genocide efforts to rebuild the nation and Armenian identity were gendered and how those conceptions continue to shape both our ethnic and gender identities.

Usually, a film on genocide is viewed as a bad idea, as commercially non-viable. Yet I fought, and persistence yielded results. That

is how *Back to Ararat* and *I Hate Dogs* were made. But this time the resistance was incomprehensible, irrational. Already from the beginning, while researching, I was told, “Fate of the women? That is a strange way to approach the genocide.”

One commissioner could allow himself to say, “But what is the big deal with rape?”

And sexual violence is almost taken for granted. But that is not surprising. After all, history is written by men; so it is with genocide. Women as casualties is only now becoming an international security issue.

There was another challenge with *Grandma's Tattoos*: How could you tell the story of thousands of victims while making it interesting, touching, and comprehensible at the same time? The victims, these women, had long passed away.

Perhaps the biggest challenge, however, was fighting my own blindness, my belief that I knew it all, that I had seen all the photos and read all the books. I was shocked when I found out that my own grandma had been a victim. And I was shocked by my family's choice in dealing with the problem – selective amnesia.

It took me three years of research and of fighting opposition to the project, but the reception to *Grandma's Tattoos* was overwhelming. We were all discovering ourselves. Women were mostly touched by it. Men were angry. But in the end, the anger was only a sign of desperation.

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“The Alleged ‘Genocide’ of 1915”: The Structure of Genocide Denial

Maria Karlsson

Introduction

Roupen, an Armenian refugee of the Sasoun region in the north-eastern corner of Asia Minor, commented in Viscount James Bryce’s and the, then young, historian Arnold Toynbee’s collection of testimonies from the Ottoman genocide of 1915:

When a detailed account of the horrors which accompanied these massacres is fully disclosed to the world, it will stand out in all history as the greatest masterpiece of brutality ever committed.¹

His conjecture, shared by many of his contemporaries who experienced the unrestrained violence and massacre, held true during the course of the First World War, including a few months post-war. After that, interest in the “Armenian Question”, as it was traditionally referred to, waned and new conflicts and topics rose to the top of the international agenda. Though lamentable, this is not an uncommon development. The Holocaust met, for example, a similar fate in the aftermath of the Second World War. Initial interest and repulsion at the horrific images from the liberation of the Western-most concentration camps was soon overshadowed by the rebuilding of societies and the developing conflict between East and West. The sombre conclusion of the dark twentieth century is therefore: it is generally not acknowledgement and recognition that has

been described as “the final stage” of genocide – it is silence and denial.

This essay will be focused on the structure of this “final stage”, and the proposed non-existence, of genocide. Instead of arguing and narrating within a scholarly set of rules and conventions, genocide denial attempts to turn what has been into what never was, and argue that what you think was, was in fact something else. In accordance with the logic of denial, the horrors of the concentration camp gas chambers during the Second World War, the atrocities of the death marches of the First World War, and the general dehumanization and massacre that is genocide are turned into non-events or trivialized beyond recognition. The deniers of genocide maintain that gas chambers were solely built as a means of delousing German enemies, organizing death marches was a benevolent act of evacuation, and what has been termed the genocides of the Jews and the Armenians were, in fact, the genocides of Germans and Ottoman Muslims.²

In spite of genocide denial being a recurrent phenomenon of modern history, it has received fairly little attention from scholars. Whether this is the result of an established custom, ideological barriers or out of fear of legitimizing denial is difficult to say, but the result has mainly been attempts to “combat” denial, to refute their arguments, rather than to try to understand and grasp how genocide denial works and what it contains.

This essay is, though brief, an attempt to do the latter.³ By comparing the cultures of denial that developed after the genocide of 1915 and the Holocaust, this essay will discuss the basic patterns of denial, the rhetorical devices, the arguments and the repeated phrases that make up a larger phenomenon of genocide denial. While the individuals involved in denying either the Holocaust or the Armenian Genocide might not belong to the same circles, share ideological affinities or world views, they seemingly work and express themselves within a transnational denialist pattern, or genre, that overwrites linguistic, political or cultural differences.⁴

Hard Denial

There was no genocide as they claim.⁵

Arguments that in every respect deny and refute the reality of genocide and mass murder, such as the conclusion drawn by Samuel Weems above, should be categorized arguments of hard, or absolute, denial. Similar arguments have by other scholars been filed as “blatant denial”, but regardless of what we choose to call it, this basic argumentative pattern requires little explanation. It is simply based on the assumption that there was no genocide; there were no death marches, no gas chambers, and no holocausts. In contrast to “softer” arguments of denial, versions of hard denial do not argue in terms of a lack of intention, of provocation, of terminological disagreements, or of numbers. It is simply concluded that nothing happened, and that any proclamations of genocide and mass murder are solely figments of the imagination. They are, the argument goes, fables told by Jewish and Armenian propagandists after each World War as a means of gaining public attention, sympathy, political support, and economic advantages.

While the denial of the Holocaust or the genocide of 1915 often depict each case as simply “a myth”, “a legend” or “a hoax”, other examples show that the reality of genocide and mass murder is regularly also negated without the explicit detour to myth and legend. Following a common denialist pattern, the aforementioned Weems consistently refers to the Armenian Genocide within quotation marks, indicating the non-reality and incredibility of the event rather than fulfilling any form of grammatical function. While Samuel Weems is a prime example in the Armenian case, this type of hard denial remains a standard technique within Holocaust denialism as well. The American Holocaust “revisionist” Arthur Butz begins the 2003 edition of his book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by referring to his investigations of the “Jewish ‘Holocaust’”.⁶ Austin App, one of the earliest deniers of the Holocaust, uses them to underline the incredulity of the “gassed six million Jews”, and Richard Harwood, the British Holocaust denier, frequently questions the “myth” – likewise his preferred designation of the Holocaust – and “the Six Million” through the use of quotation marks.⁷

Similarly, both cultures of denial tend to describe the Holocaust or the Armenian Genocide through the combination of a few standard expressions. Commonly, the Armenian Genocide is presented as “the alleged genocide of 1915”,⁸ and Weems dramatically refers to the events of that year as the “greatest tall tale being told by Armenians today”.⁹ By comparison, the culture of Holocaust denial has an even larger collection of recurrent expressions that emphasizes the Holocaust as “atrocious propaganda”, “the six million swindle”, “the fervently propagandized myth”, and so on.¹⁰

In addition to these rather blatant examples of genocide denial, it is also a recurrent

pattern of both Holocaust and Armenian Genocide denial to focus on symbolically important details as a means of rejecting the reality of the entire historical event. In the case of the Holocaust the topic of never-ending denialist scrutiny has been the existence, probability and use of gas chambers. Arguments claiming the non-existence of gas chambers usually question the scientific possibility of gassing large amounts of people, as well as the logic behind such actions. It is determined, for instance, that no Jews were gassed and that the gas chambers found post-war were in fact built by Allied forces in an attempt to disgrace the Germans.¹¹ Similarly, Harwood has stated that the Holocaust is nothing but a Jewish myth, and he feverously maintained that Germany fought a costly war and the gas chambers would simply have been counterproductive as Germany did not afford to exterminate large portions of the work force. His eventual conclusion stated that the famous concentration camps and their gas chambers were, in fact, nothing but industrial complexes.¹² The inmates of these complexes, he argues, were in fact well looked after, received medical care, and were given a daily ration “which was more than double the average civilian ration in occupied Germany in the years after 1945”.¹³

In denialist discussions of the Armenian Genocide, similar disclaimers have been directed at the, equally symbolic, death marches. Justin McCarthy has, for example, treated the forced marches through the Anatolian deserts as either completely normal or an unfortunate necessity. Deportations as such are, he writes, “a classic Middle Eastern and Balkan method to neutralize one’s enemies”, and that the ones of 1915 were in essence peaceful.¹⁴ They were, McCarthy explains, the logical answer to “the lessons of Ottoman history”¹⁵ in which the Armenian

minority in particular had been an unruly and revolution prone group. To McCarthy, the events of 1915 are best described as “The Armenian Revolution”,¹⁶ and the lack of death marches disqualify, much like Harwood’s negation of the gas chambers, any notion of genocide.

Soft Denial

As opposed to the absolutist nature of hard denial, soft denial is characterized by nuance and a relative degree of refinement. While hard denial refutes the very existence of the Holocaust or the Armenian Genocide, the softer arguments tend to rationalize, trivialize and relativize acts of genocide in a number of ways. Over time, soft arguments of denial have increased in frequency and in authority among Holocaust deniers and deniers of the Armenian Genocide alike. This development has naturally resulted in a high number of different soft patterns of denial, of which all cannot be discussed in this essay. Instead, I will focus on a handful of recurring patterns that show the major similarities between modern denial of the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. In particular, this essay will discuss the question of genocidal intention, the so-called provocation thesis, the “numbers game”, the imitation of scholarly methodology, and the, at first glance reasonable, notion that “there are two sides to every story”.

ON INTENTION

What has to be absolutely established before anything else is that the Nazis had no plan and no wish to exterminate all Jews. To say that they had is a lie.¹⁷

The central formulation of the United Nations’ *Convention on Genocide*, adopted in 1948, seems, in hindsight, to be the definition that “genocide means any of the

following acts committed *with intent to destroy*".¹⁸ The definition effectively separates genocide from natural disasters, epidemics, and other catastrophes out of human control from events caused by human intention and planning. To those of us studying genocide, intention is often a troublesome concept as it is decidedly hard to come by past documents that state an explicit intent "to destroy" an entire category of people. Nonetheless, the fact that genocides are planned and organized is an inescapable and fundamental part of what we today regard as constituting genocide. As a result, the denial or rationalization of genocidal intentions has become an effective way of undermining the reality and importance of both the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide.

The quotation above, stating that there was no Nazi intention to murder the European Jews, summarizes much of what is written within the cultures of Holocaust denial. The Jews that died did so, it is maintained, as a result of disease and "a total loss of control, not a deliberate policy".¹⁹ Among Holocaust deniers, arguments that disassociate Hitler from the Holocaust have been particularly important, stating that his intention had always been expulsion rather than extermination. In a similar way, rebuilding the reputation of Talaat Pasha, Ottoman Minister of Interior and the one to sign the deportation orders in 1915, has been an important pattern within the cultures of Armenian Genocide denial. The American Heath Lowry has, for example, referred to Talaat as an individual who has been unfairly slandered by history. Talaat was, Lowry stated, a level-headed man that helped the people around him and performed acts of "gracious kindness".²⁰

In addition, just like Holocaust denial emphasizes that the intention behind the Holocaust was expulsion and not extermination, denial of the events of 1915 tends to argue

that the intention behind the so-called death marches was benevolent evacuation, not extermination. Justin McCarthy has, for example, argued:

On 26 of May 1915, the government gave orders to relocate Armenians from potential war zones. /.../ The intent, a common one in governments fighting guerrilla wars, was to deprive the rebels of the support they needed to carry on their battles.²¹

According to McCarthy, the deportation orders were simply the adequate response to a threatening situation of Armenian upheaval. Confidently, he contends that "[t]he intentions of Istanbul were clear – to move and resettle Armenians peacefully".²² Here, genocide by deportation becomes a matter of internal security, and the intention to murder becomes the intention to "relocate", in turn rationalizing the entire Armenian Genocide. Weems claims similarly that

[t]here is no genuine proof the Ottomans desired to do anything but remove this very real threat to their army and this is why the Armenians were removed".²³

The deportations were, according to Weems, based on sound military consideration, and he comments further that the "Armenians have produced fake documents in an attempt to prove otherwise".²⁴ Here and elsewhere, the deportations are turned into a necessity, a common method of neutralizing troublemakers, a considerate program of evacuation, and a temporary measure from which the deportees were to return home safely. In all, the result is the trivialization and rationalization of the reality of the deportations, and the dismissing of the intent to commit genocide.

THE PROVOCATION THESIS

The internal threat was a massive Armenian revolt in eastern Anatolia.²⁵

In the late spring of 1915 events unfolded in the Ottoman city of Van, located in the north-eastern corner of Asia Minor, which would prove significant in terms of the developing Armenian Genocide, and in terms of its subsequent denial. The Ottoman leaders had entered the First World War in late 1914, and was the following spring fighting the Russian Army at the eastern borderlands separating the two empires. Following some initial Ottoman success, the fortunes of war changed and the Russians were able to advance into Ottoman lands. The city of Van, holding a great Armenian majority, reacted to the widespread violence and persecutions directed at Armenians all across the empire, and the city of Van became one of few instances of outright resistance to the persecutions and harsh war requisitions, aimed especially at the Christian minorities. When the Russian Army was pushed back, however, the Armenians of Van were left at the mercy of the Ottomans. The American ambassador Henry Morgenthau noted in his memoirs that

[i]nstead of following the retreating foe /.../ the Turks' Army turned aside and invaded their own territory of Van. Instead of fighting the trained Russian Army of men, they turned their rifles, machine guns, and other weapons upon the Armenian women, children and old men.²⁶

The denialist narratives, however, tend to label the events at Van as a “large scale rebellion”,²⁷ and as an “open Armenian revolt against the sultan”.²⁸ McCarthy describes, for instance, the state of eastern Anatolia in 1915 as a two-dimensional conflict of both Russian invasion and civil war.²⁹ The his-

torical context of persecutions and violence directed at the Armenians has been removed from the “revisionist” version, and Armenian revolutionaries are portrayed as the instigators and perpetrators of an actual internal threat. Armenians were terrorists, and the revolt taking place was “massive”, transforming the Armenian Genocide into a civil war fought between two sides of equal strength. Hence, the provocation thesis also disregards the apparent differences between an armed and trained army, and a scattered, defenceless minority people.

As opposed to denialist treatment of the Van incident, the few instances of Jewish resistance have remained rather invisible in the denialist literature.³⁰ In general, other arguments are utilized. Fairly widespread are, however, arguments that transform the German Jews into a hostile faction of the war. Richard Harwood writes, for example, that

[i]t is widely known that world Jewry declared itself to be a belligerent part in the Second World War, and there was therefore ample basis under international law for the Germans to intern the Jewish population as a hostile force.³¹

While not explicitly provocative, the Jews, according to Harwood, behaved in a way that rationalized the Nazi treatment of them. Hence, much like the Armenians of Van are depicted as rebels and instigators of conflict, Jews are, in much Holocaust denial, regarded as a fifth column and a threatening German enemy during the Second World War. In both cases, the acts of genocide are rationalized and described as adept ways of dealing with internal threats.

THE NUMBERS GAME

Armenians claim that as many as 2 million were massacred, but no counts of the dead were ever

taken, and the actual total can only be inferred. These claims are based on the supposition that the pre-war Armenian population /.../ was 2.5 million. According to the Ottoman census in 1914, however, it was at the most 1.5 million. /.../ One can conclude that about 300,000 died if one accepts the Ottoman census reports, or 1.3 million if the Armenian figures are utilized.³²

96 Most deniers of genocide play the “numbers game” in an attempt to trivialize and rationalize cases of genocide. The fewer the victims, deniers seem to argue, the less valid are claims of genocide. The underlying understanding of genocide displayed in these cases is therefore one where genocide is a measure of how many people died. In contrast, the scholarly use of the term is rather as a concept focused on in what manner they died (were they killed with an “intent to destroy” or not?).

Even the, at first glance, most sensible type of demographic discussions abide by an idea where the amount of victims determines the definition of genocide. In the quote above both the Armenian pre-war population, and the final death count are questioned. The traditional numbers are contended by claiming that Ottoman source material reduces the number of Armenians present and the number of total victims considerably. A number somewhere in between the two extremes is never suggested, and relying solely on the statistics of the perpetrator government in order to deduce the numbers is never questioned. As is usually the case of denialist argumentation, source criticism is only applied when it serves the proper purpose.

‘About 500,000 of Israel’s 2.6 million Jews had been in a Nazi concentration camp.’ But if half a million Jews now in Israel survived Nazi concentration camps, then the Nazis evidently had no orders to ‘gas’ them! Obviously, then, Hit-

ler and the Third Reich had no plan or desire to exterminate all Jews. They had plenty of time to have executed these 500,000!³³

Among deniers of both the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide, discussing demographics is not only utilized in order to discuss “hard facts” (especially popular among those engaged in denial as they more often than not share a view where history can be measured and tested, and where events of genocide should be treated only by crime scene analysts, but also in order to effectively cloud the issue. The numbers and demographics of past atrocities are, as the genocide scholar and sociologist Helen Fein has emphasized, notoriously difficult to take in and discuss.³⁴ The numbers stated by various deniers of genocide are usually either exaggerated or excessively lowered, unsourced or depending on other denialist material, and presented in a manner intended to confuse the reader. The Armenian-American historian Richard Hovannisian has, accurately, noted that the deniers playing the numbers game consistently “[pretend] to engage in academic inquiry, deniers make quantitative comparisons to obscure qualitative comparisons”.³⁵

Part of this game is also the juxtaposing of different death counts. Within the sphere of Holocaust denial, for example, it is often stated that the entire European continent suffered during the Second World War, and the axis powers most of all. In comparison, it is said, the deaths among the European Jews is only a minor detail. Similarly, the death of Ottoman Muslims, it is argued, cancels out the death of the Ottoman Christian minority. Everybody, it is repeated, suffers in wartime.³⁶ The primary flaw of the argumentation, as emphasized by Fein, is generally an inability to see the whole picture. Fein has explained the mechanisms of the game in the following way:

[I]f 8,000 members of a victimized group of 10,000 persons were killed intentionally, 80 percent would be victims. But if 10,000 members of a victimizer group out of 100,000 were killed randomly, 10 percent would be dead. The apologists for the victimizers could truthfully say that their 10,000 dead exceeded the 8,000 of the other group.³⁷

WHAT ABOUT “THE OTHER SIDE”?

The ‘traditional’ view of the history of the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Anatolia is less than complete, if not misleading, because the histories of the Ottoman minority groups are taken out of context. A major part of that context is the suffering of Muslims, which took place in the same regions and at the same time as the sufferings of Christians, and often transcended them. The few who have attempted to alter the traditional view have been derided as ‘revisionists’, as if revision were an academic sin and contextual historical accuracy irrelevant. In fact, revisiting one-sided history and changing deficient traditional wisdom is the business of the historian, and in few areas of history is revision so needed as in the history of the Ottoman peoples.³⁸

A common denialist strategy, seemingly effective when appealing to the consent of students and the general public in particular, is to present the denialist narrative and perspective as taking an ethical, objective and fair stance. Within this context, deniers of genocide have often described their position and arguments as combating political correctness, and as a struggle for freedom of speech. The basic logic behind these types of arguments involve ideas appearing to be of humanistic concern, where denying genocide is said to mean that you recognize the suffering of *all* humans involved, instead of the sufferings of one particular group, be it Jews or Armenians.³⁹ The roles of victim and perpetrator are as a result non-ex-

istent. Those dying carrying arms in battle and those dying unarmed, persecuted, and as a result of a planned, systematic process of mass murder are, in accordance with the argument, equally tragic casualties. The genocide scholar Roger Smith has accounted for these types of arguments as belonging within a “flawed moral discourse”,⁴⁰ where originally sound, empathetic, scholarly, and common-sense statements are proposed in an off-context, in turn denying, trivializing, and rationalizing genocide.

In McCarthy’s discussion on the need for revising Ottoman history above, the humanistic appeal appears in the first couple of sentences, where he maintains, as he does throughout his books, that the sufferings of one group have been overshadowed by the sufferings of another – and that the truly human thing to do would be to lay political considerations and controversial terms such as “genocide” aside, and view the event for what he claims it to have been, namely a civil war in which all people suffered.⁴¹ In the same way, the events of 1915 have been described as “a general tragedy that engulfed *all* the people of the Empire”⁴². Here, too, denial of the Armenian Genocide is described as a humanistic concern and as a way to move beyond controversial categories such as “victim” and “perpetrator”. As a result, those not agreeing with McCarthy are portrayed as disagreeing with the apparent truism that attests that all suffering is bad, and that you avoid the “racism”⁴³ displayed by those who define the treatment of the Armenians and the other Christian minorities as genocide. Attempts at humanistic concern are made within the context of Holocaust denial as well. Harwood concludes, for example, in his *Did Six Million Really Die?* that “[d]oubtless, several thousand Jewish persons did die in the course of the Second World War, but this must be seen in the con-

text of a war that cost many millions of innocent victims on all sides”.⁴⁴

The second ethical stand taken by McCarthy at the top of this section, and by deniers in general, concerns the topic of scientific and scholarly methodology. McCarthy writes above of those few, the “revisionists”, who have questioned the “traditional view” of the many, and consequently have been shunned by much of the academic community. However, McCarthy claims, as most deniers do, that he is only attempting to show “the other side” of the “debate”. Founded in the scientifically sound notion of seeing every side of an issue, of remaining unbiased, McCarthy and other deniers appeal for scholarly legitimacy, stretching the saying “there are two sides to every story” to its utmost. McCarthy, Lowry, Shaw, and Weems all present themselves as neutral seekers of fact, as “warriors for truth” and as genuine revisionists dealing with a traditionally one-sided history. Similarly, deniers of the Holocaust present themselves as the “revisionist” side of a historical debate, referring to the “others” as “the ‘extermination’ writers” and to their position as “the ‘extermination’ thesis”.

Conclusion

In the light of these different hard and soft patterns of denial, it does not seem far-fetched to claim that genocide denial, whether directed at refuting the reality of the Holocaust or the genocide of 1915, form an overarching structure. Naturally, each and every individual, group or organization engaged in denialist enterprises utilizes the different patterns in a number of different ways. Studying genocide denial closely, it becomes evident that there are different types of genocide de-

nial, but these types are decided rather by *how* genocide is being denied than by *which* genocide is being denied.

Today, a combination of a number of soft arguments of denial is by far the most popular and most successful way to deny and trivialize the realities of genocide. From the 1970s onward, denial of both the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide has been increasingly professionalized and refined. The general development has been one where the increased overall interest in, and scholarly study of, all genocides have called for a type of denialism that clouds an issue by relying on common sense rhetoric, seemingly scholarly sounding arguments and by directing emphasis away from the helplessness of the victims.

For the foreseeable future, the development and continuation of Holocaust and Armenian Genocide denial seems fairly unaffected by the passage of time. If anything, the fairly anonymous and unrestrained online presence of most denialist texts and arguments suggests the coexistence of hard and soft, crude and refined, overtly racist and seemingly scholarly types of genocide denial. Here, the most accurate description of the mechanisms and structures of genocide denialism is an old Freudian joke relating what is usually known as “kettle logic”. In his *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* from 1905, Freud told a story where person A had borrowed a kettle from person B. Upon the kettle’s return, B finds it to have a large hole in the bottom. Being confronted with this, A exclaims that first of all, he returned the kettle undamaged; secondly, the hole was there when he borrowed it; thirdly, he never borrowed the kettle.

Endnotes

- 1 Roupen, interview dated 6th November 1915, in Bryce & Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Gray of Falloden by Viscount Bryce*, uncensored edition, Ara Sarafian (ed.), Princeton: Gomidas Institute 2000 (1916), document no. 22 , p. 119.
- 2 For these specific denialist arguments, see, for instance, Arthur Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry*, Chicago: Theses & Dissertations Press 2003 , p. 21; Stanford Shaw & Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume II: Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808–1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997, p. 315; Austin App, *The Six Million Swindle*, retrieved at <http://www.vho.org/aaargh/fran/livres9/APP6million.pdf> (16 January 2010), 1973 , p. 3; and Samuel A. Weems, *Armenia: Secrets of a “Christian” Terrorist State: The Armenian Great Deception Series – Volume I*, Dallas: St. John Press 2002 , p. 5.
- 3 For a more thorough study of the topic, see Maria Karlsson *Cultures of Denial: Comparing Holocaust and Armenian Genocide Denial*, Dissertation: Lund University, 2015.
- 4 Please note that this essay will use the phrases “the genocide of 1915” and “the Armenian Genocide” interchangeably. This is partly due to the Armenians being the most numerous and most explicitly victimized group at the time, and partly because the post-genocide denial speaks almost exclusively about the Armenians. Comparably, denial of the Holocaust refers almost exclusively to the Jewish victims, and very rarely mentions the Roma victims, Jehovah’s witnesses or those murdered as part of the Nazi euthanasia program.
- 5 Samuel Weems, *Armenia: Secrets of a “Christian” Terrorist State: The Armenian Great Deception Series – Volume I*, Dallas: St. John Press 2002, p. xvii.
- 6 Arthur Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry*, Chicago: Theses & Dissertations Press, 2003 (1976), p. 8.
- 7 Austin App, *The Six Million Swindle*, 1973, [<http://www.vho.org/aaargh/fran/livres9/APP6million.pdf>] (16 January, 2010), p. 2; Richard Harwood, 1974.
- 8 Weems, 2002, p. xi; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*, Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press 2005, p. 262.
- 9 Weems, 2002, p. 38.
- 10 App, 1973, p. 6;2, 3 etc.; 2.
- 11 App, 1973, p. 18; 23.
- 12 Harwood, 1974, p. 8.
- 13 Harwood, 1974, p. 43-45.
- 14 Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922*, Princeton: The Darwin Press 1995, p. 288.
- 15 McCarthy, 1995, p. 335.
- 16 McCarthy, 1995, p. 185.
- 17 App, 1973, p. 8.
- 18 The United Nations, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 1948. Emphasis added.

- 19 Butz, 2003, p. 55.
- 20 Heath Lowry, *The Story behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, Istanbul: The Isis Press 1990, p. 39.
- 21 Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire*, London: Arnold 2001, p. 110.
- 22 McCarthy, 1995, p. 193.
- 23 Weems, 2002, p. 58–59.
- 24 Weems, 2002, p. 59.
- 25 McCarthy, 2001, p. 106.
- 26 Henry S. Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company 1918, p. 205.
- 27 McCarthy, 2001, p. 106. Indeed, the sections discussing the Armenians in McCarthy's books are entitled: *The Armenian Revolution* (1995), and *Armenian revolt* (2001).
- 28 Stanford Shaw & Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume II: Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808–1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997, p. 315.
- 29 Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of Empire*, New York & London: New York University Press 1983, p. 118.
- 30 The 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is, for instance, barely mentioned in any of the Holocaust denial narratives, and in no instance is it referred to in an attempt to prove Jewish provocation. Harwood does write about the “terrorists in the Ghetto uprising”, but he does not, however, draw any distinctive conclusions out of the attempted resistance. See Harwood, 1974, p. 27.
- 31 Harwood, 1974, p. 6.
- 32 Shaw & Shaw, 1997, p. 315–316.
- 33 App, 1973, p. 3.
- 34 Helen Fein, *Denying Genocide: From Armenia to Bosnia: A Lecture Delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science on 22 January 2001*, Occasional Papers in Comparative and International Politics 1, The London School of Economics and Political Science n.d.
- 35 Richard Hovannisian, “Denial of the Armenian Genocide in Comparison with Holocaust Denial” in Hovannisian, Richard G. (ed.), *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1999, p. 212.
- 36 See, for example, Weems, 2002, p. 139.
- 37 Fein, n.d., p. 7.
- 38 McCarthy, 1995, p. 2–3.
- 39 See, for example, Weems, 2002, p. 113.
- 40 Roger Smith, “The Armenian Genocide: Memory, Politics, and the Future” in Hovannisian, Richard G. (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, Houndmills: Macmillan 1992, p. 4.
- 41 McCarthy, 2001, p. 109.
- 42 Shaw & Shaw, 1997, p. x.
- 43 McCarthy, 1995, p. 3.
- 44 Harwood, 1974, p. 45.

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In Times of Genocide

1915 – 2015

*Report from a conference on the Armenian Genocide
and Syriac Seyfo*

During January 14–15, 2015, Studieförbundet Bilda arranged a conference at the Swedish Christian Study Centre in Jerusalem. The title was *In Times of Genocide 1915–2015*, and the topic was the Armenian Genocide and the Syriac Seyfo in the Ottoman Empire one hundred years ago. With this book, Bilda is happy to present all the lectures to a broader audience.

The lecturers – and thereby authors – are mostly Swedish academic scholars who have specialized in different aspects of these unspeakable horrors.

Professor *Klas-Göran Karlsson* presents this genocide as the archetype of all genocides; the Armenian Jerusalemite, archivist *Kevork Hintlian*, gives the victims names and faces when he passes on a handful of all the stories told by the victims and eye-witnesses he has interviewed over the years; Professor *David Gaunt* shares his research on the Syriac Seyfo in particular; *Maria Småberg* and *Göran Gunner* write in their articles about some of the Scandinavian missionaries and their organizations who became some of the most accurate eye-witnesses to the genocide; *Vahagn Avedian* gives an account of the official reports dispatched by the Swedish envoys to the Swedish Foreign Office; Film-maker *Suzanne Khardalian* discusses in her article memory and amnesia among the survivors and their children; in the closing article, *Maria Karlsson* establishes that the final stage of genocides tends to be not recognition, but denial using some well-established patterns.